From the pages of RUSE™

ARCHARD'S AGENTS #1

Written by Chuck Dixon, art by Mike Perkins, colors by Laura Villari

Detective Comics veteran Chuck Dixon lends his talents to the world of CrossGen's greatest detective! Delve deeper into the world of RUSE with this story focusing on the many agents in Simon Archard's employ. Meet the diabolical menace of the Consortium of Aggrieved Manservants — gentlemen's gentlemen who are no gentlemen at all!

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From The Pages of RUSE

ARCHARD'S AGENTS

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A MOST CONVENIENT MURDER.

DESPERATE WARFARE!

VILLAINOUS OBSESSION!

SAVAGE PASSION!

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Chuck Dixon Mike Perkins Laura Villari

"TWENTY *YEARS* AGO THIS WEEK.
"ALMOST LIKE *YESTERDAY*, ME LEADING THE BOYS OF THE DUKE'S AND HORSE AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.
THOSE WERE THE DAYS OF GLORY.

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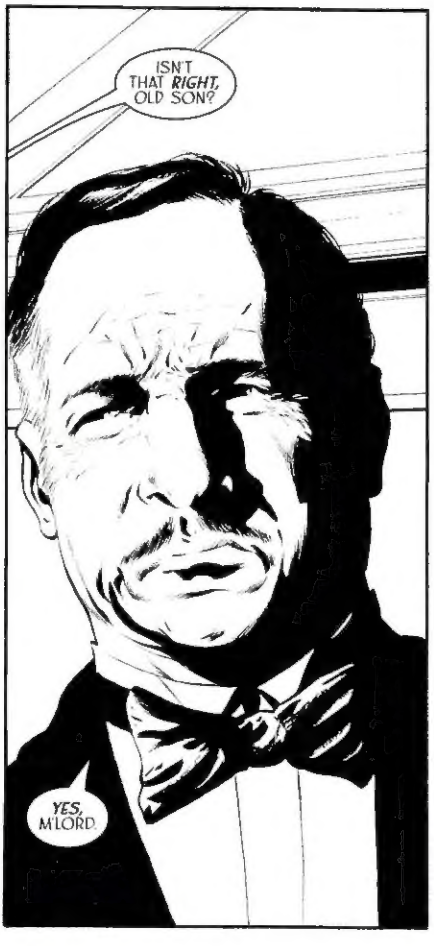
"OUTNUMBERED A HUNDRED TO *ONE* AT THAT FORGOTTEN OUTPOST.
"REDUCED TO BAYONETS AND GUNBUTTS AND *FISTS* AT THE VERY END.
"BUT THOSE SAVAGES GOT THE *MEASURE* OF OUR METTLE AND LEFT THE FIELD.
"*BRAVE* LADS ALL. SO *MANY* GALLANT SONS FELL THAT DAY.

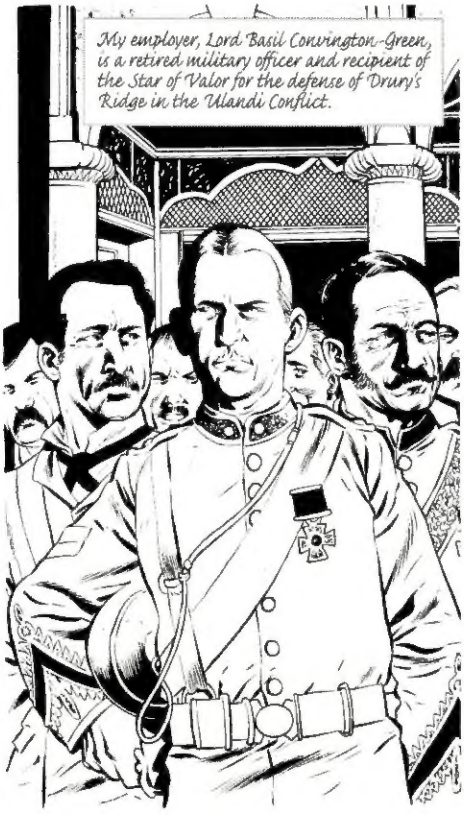
"AGAIN AND *AGAIN* THE ULANDI IMPIS RUSHING OUR GUNS AS WE RAN LOW ON CARTRIDGES.

"YOU WERE THERE, BELLINGS. YOU *KNOW* OF WHAT I SPEAK."


ISN'T THAT *RIGHT*, OLD SON?
YES, M'LORD.

YE GODS, WHAT A DAY! SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AGAINST A HORDE OF MAN-EATING KILLERS!
I DON'T RECALL AS THEY WERE CANNIBALS, M'LORD.
NEAR AS MAYBE, BELLINGS! LORD ONLY KNOWS WHAT UNSPEAKABLE ACTS THOSE BEASTS ENGAGED IN!
BUT WE PUT PAID TO THEM, eh?
SENT THEM PACK-- OH!

My esteemed compatriots,
I wish to apply for membership in your fine association. I shall hereon proscribe my qualifications for membership.


My employer, Lord Basil Convington-Green, is a retired military officer and recipient of the Star of Valor for the defense of Drury's Ridge in the Ulandi Conflict.

SEE WHAT YOU MADE ME *DO*, BELLINGS?
M'APOLOGIES, M'LORD.
APOLOGIES BE *DAMNED!*

MY EXCELLENT HUMOR HAS *VANISHED!*
OFF WITH YOU, BELLINGS!
AS YOU *WISH*, M'LORD.

An honor, I can attest as an eyewitness, that was hardly deserved as Lord Basil was absent for most of the action.

All of which was to come home to my employer in a deeply ironic and most unpleasant manner that I will further describe.
MISTER BELLINGS, THERE'S SUMPIN' IN THE MORNIN PAPER OF *INNEREST* T'YOU.
HM?

YOU WAS WITH THEM JOHNNIES AT DRURY'S RIDGE, eh, BELLINGS?
ER?
HM?
THOSE BRAVE CHAPS WHO FACED DOWN ALL THOSE HOSTILES?
ONE OF 'EM GOT STUCK THIS PAST NIGHT.
The PENNY
HERO OF ULANDI CAMP
SLAIN IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTA
I am not one to believe in co-incidence.
Or in opportunity denied.
OI, THAT'S ME PAPER, MATE!
This unforeseen event required thought followed by action.
tum de tum tum tum...

Daniel Fitzpatrick Conners (SV, serving with distinction through many campaigns. Most notable of these being the Ulandi Conflict in
Duke of Hammershire Rifles ret.)
was found brutally murdered by a
single knife wound to the back in the
library of his home in West
past evening. The estimable war hero was awa
not an apparent motive
ctim's many valuable
were left unmolested. A
haustive investigation of
s and cowardly act
the authorities.
as a career
Cross,
tern land of
to her local
Wainscott of
Baroness
ermanent
and has
ates of
to the
but
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site
comp
The
internati
late

A PENNY R TWO FOR AN AGIN' MOTHER, LAD?
HOP TO, CRONE.
NOT FEELING CHARITABLE THIS MORNING, BELLINGS?
I'M CERTAIN MISS BISHOP WOULD DISAPPROVE.
MISTER ARCHARD?

I NEED YOU TO KEEP A WARY EYE FOR ME.
IS THERE FOUL PLAY IN THE *MAKING*, SIR?
A POSSIBLE *PATTERN* CRIME, BELLINGS.
A DECORATED VETERAN OF ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS BATTLES OF RECENT HISTORY IS MURDERED.
NOT SIGNIFICANT OF *ITSELF*. BUT ON THE TWENTY YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE...IT BEGGARS *INVESTIGATION*.
IS THERE REALLY ENOUGH TO SUSPECT A *CONNECTION*, SIR?
ONLY IF YOU CONSIDER A *THIRD* PIECE OF EVIDENCE.
...AS I WAS LOOKING IN THE RUBBISH BINS, I FOUND A *DISCREPANCY*.
THE MARKET RECEIPTS SHOW THE PURCHASE OF *PRIME* BEEF. BUT THE REMAINS OF CUTS I FOUND ARE OF DECIDEDLY *INFERIOR* GRADE.
YOUR COOK IS IN COLLUSION WITH THE BUTCHER TO *CHEAT* ON THE HOUSEHOLD BUDGET.
Uh... I'LL HAVE A *WORD* WITH HIM, SIR.

COLONEL CONNERS, THE *FIRST* VICTIM, SUFFERED A STAB WOUND OF CERTAIN DEPTH AND WIDTH
DIMENSIONS *CONSISTENT* WITH THE BLADE OF AN ULANDI *ASSEGAI* OR STABBING SPEAR
DEAR ME
JUST A WORD OF *CAUTION*.
CONTACT ME SHOULD YOU SEE *ANYTHING* SUGGESTING A THREAT TO LORD BASIL
TRUST THAT I *WILL*, SIR
ALSO...
And so it was I found my own suppositions falling in line with that of the Great Detective and sometimes-benefactor, Simon Archard
All of which only served to bring to bloom seeds already implanted in my thoughts.
I would satisfy Mr. Archard's suspicions and bring a great degree of satisfaction to my own ambitions
It seemed simplicity itself

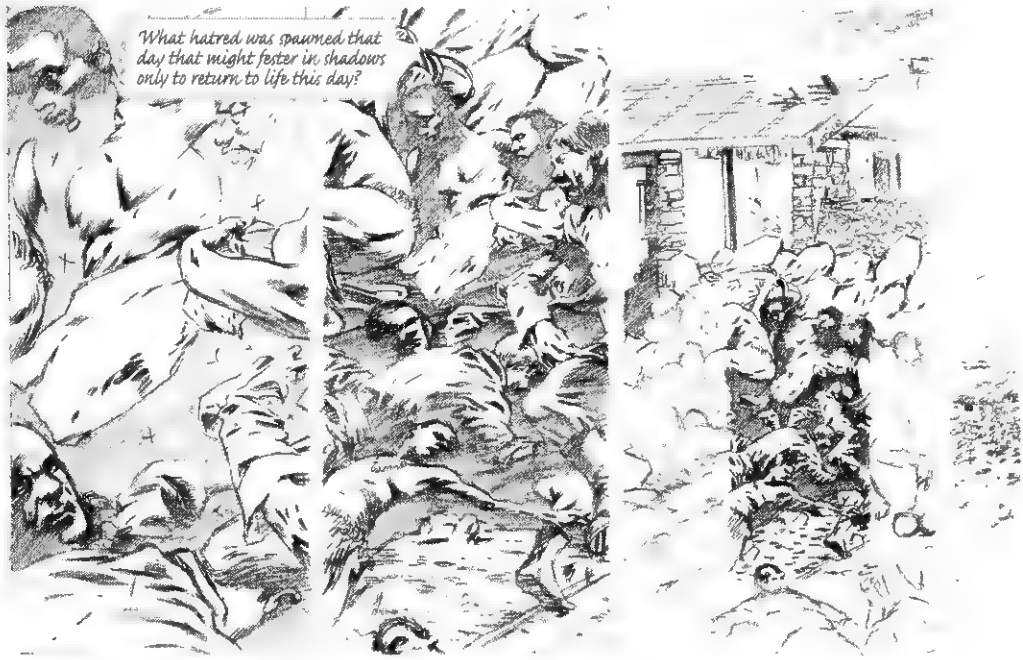
Some fellow was out there satisfying some personal grievance with a bloody assegai
Where was the harm in making certain his endeavors succeeded by helping justice along a mite?
STEADY, JAQUIE

FILTHY WEATHER!
MAKE CERTAIN YOU BRUSH JAQUERANDA DOWN BEFORE STABLING HIM, TILSBURY
YES, MUM
STEADY ON WITH THE BUMBERSHOOT, WILLIAM!
I'M GETTING DRENCHED!
RIGHT, M'LADY
BRUSH HIM DOWN TILSBURY?
TREATS 'IM BETTER N TH' HELP SHE DOES
STEADY WHAT'S GOT Y' SO AGITATED?
Eh?

U'SUTHU!
SAINTS'N' DIVVILS!
ARCADIAN
Morning Edition. Price One Penny
COND MYSTERIOUS
TABBING BAFFLE
CONSTABULA
E VICTIM WAS ANOTHER VA
VETERAN OF DRURY'S
DOOM ONCE-ES
ITED A SCORE

UNNH!
EEAAAH!
And damn me for a fool if Mr Arcnard's anticipations didn't bear their deadly fruit
I could only wonder, after all these years passed, who might wish to kill off the old lads of the Riage?
ERE NOW! BUY YOUR OWN PAPER, BELLINGS!

Who stood to gain from their untimely demise?


What hatred was spawned that day that might fester in shadows only to return to life this day?

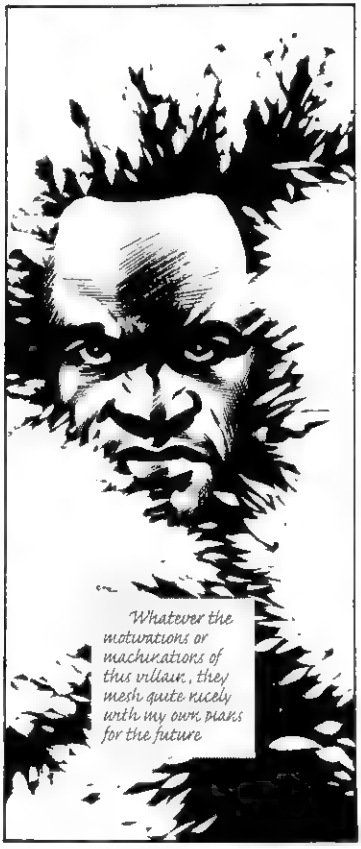
PLEASE KEEP OF THE GRAS
PLEASE KEEP OFF GRASS
What bloody-handed maniac might resort to murder after all this time?
THEIR HORSE SOLDIERS ARRIVE IN GREAT NUMBERS. THE DAY IS LOST.*
THE REDJACKETS HAVE WON
*TRANSLATED FROM THE ULANDI BAKTU DIALECT

WE WILL CROSS BACK TO OUR LANDS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BOFFOKHO RIVER
THEN WE FIGHT NO MORE
NO MORE
RETURN TO YOUR KRAAL, YOUNG MAN
LET THE REDJACKETS HAVE THE VALLEY
RETURN TO WHAT, GREAT ULU S'TOTHO?
I RETURN FROM WAR, ENONI
AND ARE YOU A BLOODED WARRIOR?
NO BUT I STILL WISH US TO BE WED
ONLY WARRIORS WHO WASH THEIR SPEARS MAY BE GIVEN THE KING'S PERMISSION TO MARRY
WE DO NOT NEED THE KING'S BLESSING WE CAN LEAVE THE KRAAL AND STAY TOGETHER

THE BATTLE ENDS AND STILL I HAVE NOT WASHED MY SPEAR IN BLOOD
I AM WITHOUT HONOR
I AM WITHOUT PROOF OF MY BRAVERY

THEN THAT IS WHAT THE GREAT GODS OF THE SKY AND EARTH WISH
SHALL WE WAGE WAR AGAINST THEIR GUNS AND CANNON ONLY THAT YOU MIGHT SPEAR A REDJACKET?

GOODBYE, CETOWAYA


Whatever the motivations or machinations of this villain, they mesh quite nicely with my own plans for the future

And I saw no reason to delay those plans any further.
BLAST IT ALL
I KNOW I PLACED THAT FOLIO OF ENGRAVINGS SOMEWHERE ON THESE SHELVES
Eh?
BELLINGS? I DON'T RECALL RINGING FOR YOU
NO, M'LORD

I WAS PREPARING TO RETIRE FOR THE EVENING
I ONLY WONDERED IF THERE WAS ANYTHING YOU REQUIRED
ONLY IF YOU MIGHT KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE FOLIO I'M SEARCHING FOR
THAT'S NOT QUITE THE VARIETY OF HELP I WAS OFFERING M'LORD
GOOD GAWD!

U'SUTHU!
Now here was a pretty set of circumstances.
He takes adversity as it comes and seeks to turn it to his advantage
The Better Man is not bested by the vagaries of life.
THAT WAS DEUCED CLOSE, WOT?
But then fate has a way of altering even the most carefully considered strategies
BUH BLOODY DUH DEVIL!

Not quite the way I had planned this evening's series of events
STUH-STUH
STAY AWAY!
GUH!
BEJINGS?
And so I was left with a compelling and convincing picture, a tragic tableau plain to any, who saw its aftermath
In all of this, who might notice that a number of Lord Basil's assets have gone missing?
The shrill of a policeman's whistle
The beat of horse's hooves on cobbles.
Mr. Archard and Miss Emma hot on the heels of dark deeds and one step in advance of the constabulary

In the duration of an eyeblink, I saw all the potential flaws of my 'foolproof' plan.
I imagined how it might look under the cold, basilisk gaze of Mr. Simon Archard
I recalled in that instant the kind solicitation I'd received from your organization
Events called for me to reconsider my initial response to that invitation
As I mentioned above, I am not a believer in opportunity denied
THE CONSORTIUM OF AGGRIEVED MAN-SERVANTS
WODEHOUSE PARK
T.C.O.A.M.
I hope that you might still consider me as a candidate for inclusion in your proud ranks.
Most sincerely yours,
EDMUND BELLINGS CALLING
WE'VE BEEN ANTICIPATING YOU, MISTER BELLINGS

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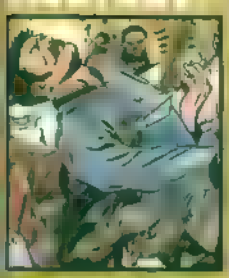
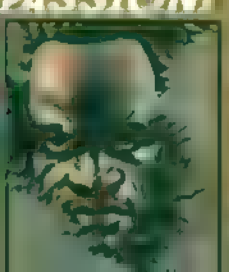
A MOST CONVENIENT MURDER.



SAVAGE PASSION!



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Chuck Dixon Mike Perkins Laura Villari

THE ARCADIAN

Copiously Illustrated **WAR EDITION! Price One Ha'Penny**

TO BATTLE IN ULANDILAND!

WAR INEVITABLE AS HOSTILES REMAIN IN DEFIANCE OF INTERNATIONAL DECREE

OUR BRAVE LADS SET SAIL FOR VICTORY AGAINST A BLOOD-THIRSTY FOE

Thousands thronged the quayside along Cecil Roads today to see off the courageous sons of Partington as they boarded troopships for the dusky coasts and untamed wilderness of Ulandiland. Military action became unavoidable when, time after time, savage and primitive warriors of the murderous Ulandis refused to depart from territories occupied by their more civilized neighbors. Days ago, word reached the appalled citizens of this city by way of telegraphic transmission of various atrocities and outrages committed by these godless imps upon honest farmers and miners on the sun-strangled frontier of the New Sudetan autonomous region. So vile and despicable were the torments enacted upon these innocents that they may not be described in a paper read avidly by discerning feminine custom and those of weak constitution.

Fear not, however, as a grave comeuppance marches unstoppable to the root of these horrors. A force of Partington's sturdiest hearts in uniform have assembled under the stern and just leadership of General Phillip Hart-Pellikan, recent hero of the justly-lauded B'nongo Campaign against slavers working their merciless trade along the rivers of Ryandaar. As a major in the Wolvinton Heavy Dragoons so aptly stated, "We'll treat these Ulandi johnnies to a few feet of steel and see if they don't come to the light right smartly." Well said, sir. Well said.

And so, we join our fellow city-dwellers in giving a rousing cheer for our men and boys as they step to the beat of the drum once more for what we're sure will prove a decisive and rapid blow to the heathen that dare stand defiant against the crush of civilization. A journey of one month at sea will transport the regiments and all provisions and weapons necessary to their destination on the jungled shores of that far-off land. Of particular interest is •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

A NATION LOOKS TO ITS HERO

General Phillip Hart-Pellikan promises a brisk round of campaigns that will bring the hostiles to bay and our lads trodding home before winter holidays. We're certain he'll show the same pluck against this rabble as he once did eye-to-eye with the Shah Ibabba at the Battle of Omdunhobar in the Jiddawhalla Conflict of a decade past.

A BRIGHT LAD'S PROMISING FUTURE

PARTINGTON YOUTH FOILS CRIMINAL MISCHIEF

A burglary gang that has plagued this city and environs for months was placed under arrest with the help of a youngster. Local student Simon Archard approached police this past week-end with a variety of clues that led them to the location of the Jolly Street Randys, a mob of thugs who have perpetrated hundreds of acts of sneak-thievery since this Summer past. Little Simon told this reporter that he pieces together a 'string of evidence and circumstance' from closely studying newspaper accounts and visiting sites of the robberies •••PLEASE CONTINUE INSIDE

As It May Please the Court and Barristers of Our Fine Land:

00111

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CGE

TWENTY YEARS AGO THIS WEEK
ALMOST LIKE YESTERDAY, ME LEADING THE BOYS OF THE DUKES AND HORSE AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS
THOSE WERE THE DAYS OF GLORY

OUTNUMBERED A HUNDRED TO *ONE* AT THAT FORGOTTEN OUTPOST

AGAIN AND *AGAIN* THE ULANDI MP'S RUSHING OUR GUNS AS WE RAN LOW ON CARTRIDGES

REDUCED TO BAYONETS AND GUNBUTTS AND *FISTS* AT THE VERY END

BUT THOSE SAVAGES GOT THE *MEASURE* OF OUR METTLE AND LEFT THE FIELD

BRAVE LADS ALL SO *MANY* GALLANT SONS FELL THAT DAY

YOU WERE THERE BELINGS YOU *KNOW* OF WHAT I SPEAK

ISN'T THAT *RIGHT*, OLD SON?

YES, M'LORD

YE *GODS*, WHAT A DAY! SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AGAINST A *HORDE* OF MAN EATING KILLERS!

I DON'T RECALL AS THEY WERE *CANNIBALS*, M'LORD

NEAR AS *MAY BE*, BEL'NGS! LORD ONLY *KNOWS* WHAT UNSPEAKABLE ACTS THOSE *BEASTS* ENGAGED IN!

BUT WE PUT *PAID* TO THEM, eh?

SENT THEM PACK - OH!

SEE WHAT YOU MADE ME *DO*, BEL'NGS?

M'APOLOGIES M'LORD

APOLOGIES BE *DAMNED*!

MY EXCELLENT HUMOR HAS *VANISHED*!

OFF WITH YOU, BEL'NGS!

AS YOU *WISH*, M'LORD

My esteemed compatriots

I wish to apply for membership in your fine association. I shall hereon prescribe my qualifications for membership

My employer, Lord Basil Cornington-Green, is a retired military officer and recipient of the Star of Valor for the defense of Drury's Ridge in the Uwandi Conflict

An honor I can attest is in extraordinary that was hardly deserved. Lord Basil was at fault for most of the action

All of which was to come home to my employer in a deeply ironic and most unpleasant manner that I will further describe

MISTER BEL'NGS THERE'S SUMP'N IN THE MORNIN' PAPER OF *INNEREST* T' YOU

HM?

YOU WAS WITH THEM JOHNNIES AT DRURY'S RIDGE, eh BELLINGS?

ER?

HA!?

THOSE BRAVE CHAPS WHO FACED DOWN ALL THOSE *HOSTILES?*

ONE OF 'EM GOT *STUCK* THIS PAST NIGHT

The PENNY

HERO OF ULANDI CAMP SLAIN IN UNUSUAL CIRCUMST

Daniel Fitzpatrick Conners (SY
Duke of Hammershire Rifles (ret.)
as found brutally murdered by a
single knife wound to the back in the
library of his home in West
past evening. The
not an apparent motive
many valuable
were left unmolested. A
haustive investigation of
and cowardly act
the authorities
as a career

serving with distinction through
many campaigns. Most notable of
these being the Ulandi Conflict in
the New Sudetan several decades ago
The estimable war hero was a
the Star of Valor for
actions at the Battle
in which
Hamme

I am not one to believe in coincidence.

Or in opportunity, twisted

OH, THAT'S ME *PAPER*, MATE!

HE'S SLAIN

Thus, however, even reassured, I cannot be lowered to act on

A PENNY FOR 'EM, TWO FOR AN ASHEN *MOTHER*, LAD!

HOP TO, CRONE

NOT FEELING *CHARITABLE* THIS MORNING BELLINGS?

I'M CERTAIN *MISS BISHOP* WOULD DISAPPROVE

I NEED YOU TO KEEP A WARY EYE FOR ME

IS THERE FOUL PLAY IN THE *MAKING*, SIR?

A POSSIBLE *PATTERN* OF ME, BEE, NGS

A DECORATED VETERAN OF ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS BATTLES OF RECENT HISTORY IS MURDERED

NOT SIGNIFICANT OF *ITSELF* BUT ON THE TWENTY YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE IT BEGS *INVESTIGATION*

IS THERE REALLY ENOUGH TO SUSPECT A *CONNECTION*, SIR?

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DIMENSIONS *CONSISTENT* WITH THE BLADE OF AN L'ANDI ASSEGAI OR STABBING SPEAR

SIR M

JUST A WORD OF *CAUTION*

CONTACT ME SHOULD YOU SEE *ANYTHING* SUGGESTING A THREAT TO LORD BASI

TRUST THAT I *WILL*, SIR

ALSO

AS I WAS LOOKING IN THE RUBBISH BINS I FOUND A *DISCREPANCY*

THE MARKET RECEIPTS SHOW THE PURCHASE OF *PRIME* BEEF BUT THE REMAINS OF CUTS I FOUND ARE OF DECIDEDLY *INFERIOR* GRADE

YOUR COOK IS IN COLLUSION WITH THE BUTCHER TO *CHEAT* ON THE HOUSEHOLD BUDGET

Uh I'LL HAVE A *WORD* WITH HIM, SIR

And so it was I found my own suppositions having at least arrived at that of the Great Detective and sometime benefactor Simon Archard

He of all men was entitled to privacy to whom each day unbidden tendrils of investigation

I could not fly Mr Archard's suspicion and bring a great degree of satisfaction to my own ambitions

It seemed somewhat itself

Some fellow was out there satisfying some perverse grievance with a bloody assegai

Where was the harm in making certain his endeavor succeeded by keeping justice doing a mute?

FILTHY WEATHER!

MAKE CERTAIN YOU BRUSH JAQUERANDA DOWN BEFORE STABBING HIM TESBURY

YES, M'LM

STEADY ON WITH THE BUMBERSHOOT WILLIAM!

I'M GETTING DRENCHED!

RIGHT, M'LADY

STEADY, TAQUINE

STEADY WHAT'S GOT Y SO AGITATED?

Eh?

U'SUTHU!

SAINTS'N' DIVVILS!

UNNH!

EEYAAAH!

ARCADIAN

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COND MYSTERIOUS

TABBING BAFFLE

CONSTABULAR

E VICTIM WAS ANOTHER VA

VETERAN OF DRURY'S

DOOM ONCE-ES

ITED A SCORE

And damn me for a fool, Mr Arcaard, articulators didn't bear their denials fruit

I could only wonder, after all these years passed, who might wish to kill off the old lads of the Rage?

ERE NOW! BUY YOUR OWN PAPER, BELONGS!

Who stood to gain from their untimely demise?

PLEASE KEEP OFF GRASS

What bloody-handed maniac might resort to murder after all this time?

What hatred was hawked that day that might fester in shadows only to return to life this day?

THEIR HORSE SOLDIERS ARRIVE IN GREAT NUMBERS THE DAY IS LOST*

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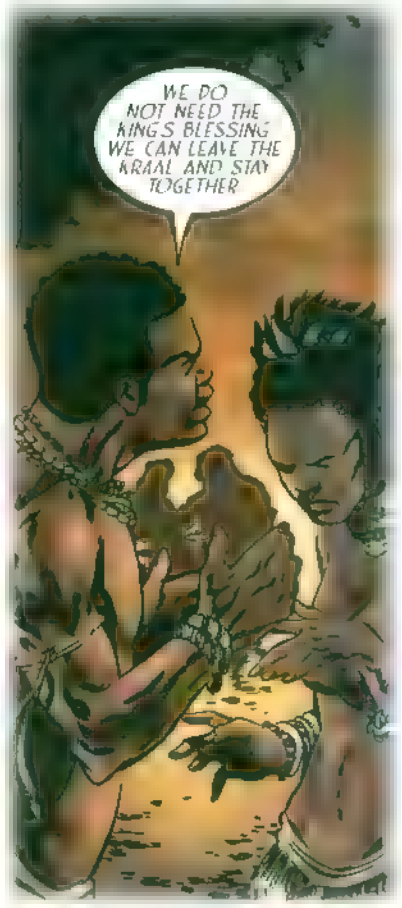
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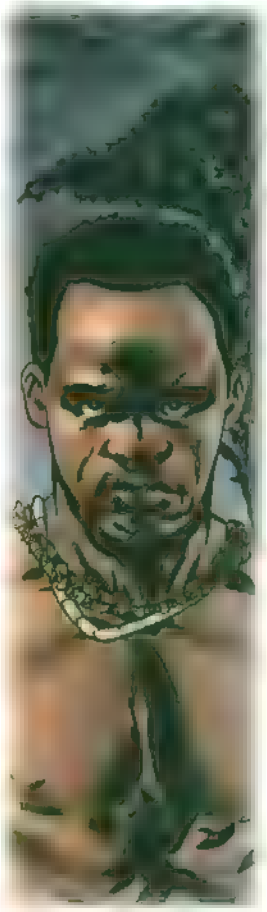
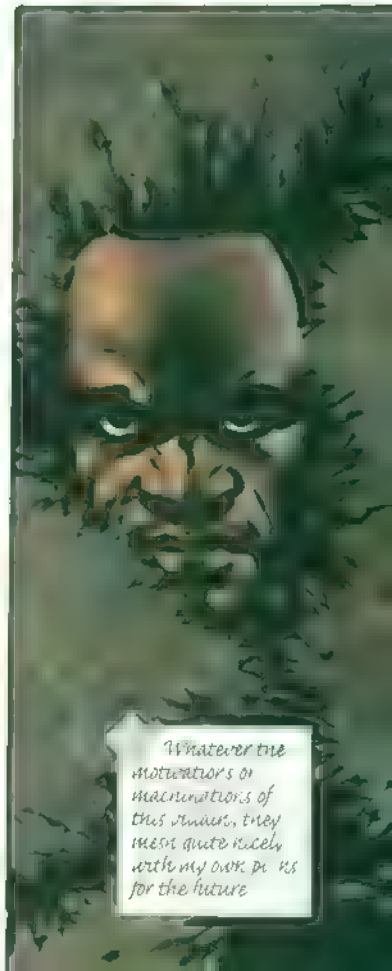
GOODBYE CETOWAYA




Whatever the motivations or machinations of this woman, they mesh quite nicely with my own plans for the future

And I saw no reason to delay those plans any further

BLAST IT ALL

I *KNOW* I PLACED THAT FOLIO OF ENGRAVINGS *SOMEWHERE* ON THESE SHELVES

EH?

BELLINGS? I DON'T *RECALL* RINGING FOR YOU

NO, M'LORD

I WAS PREPARING TO *RETIRE* FOR THE EVENING

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But then fate has a way of altering even the most carefully considered strategies

The Better Man is not bested by the vagaries of life

THAT WAS PEGGED CLOSE, WOT?

He takes adversity as it comes and seek to turn it to his advantage

GUH!

BLOODY DEVIL!

And so I was left with a compelling and convincing picture a tragic tableau dark to any who saw its aftermath

It did, this time, mean I might notice that a number of Lord Burnsail's more genteel

The sound of a policeman's whistle

The beat of hooves or cotches

Mr Arcnard and Miss Emma hot on the heels of dark deeds and one step in advance of the constabulary

In the duration of an eyeblink I saw all the potential flaws of my 'foolproof' plan
I imagined how it might look under the cold, basilisk gaze of Mr Simon Archard
I recalled in that instant the kind solicitation I'd received from your organization
Events called for me to reconsider my initial response to that invitation
As I mentioned above, I am not a believer in opportunity denied
THE CONSORTIUM OF AGGRIEVED MAN-SERVANTS
Clodehouse Farm
T.C.o.A.M.
I hope that you might find consider me as a candidate for inclusion in your proud ranks
Most sincerely yours,
EDMUND BELLINGS CALLING
WE'VE BEEN ANTICIPATING YOU, MISTER BELLINGS

CHUCK DIXON writer

Following a disastrous series of Polar expeditions that he alone survived, Colonel Charles "Chuck" Dixon turned his attention to the medium of graphic storytelling. In this area of endeavor, he continued the adventures of such long-standing characters as *Die Fledermausmensch* and *The Inhibitor* for various publishers. In his compound in the Unghah Wildlife Preservation Concern, he regularly scribes diverse literary entertainments for CrossGeneration Limited when not hunting rogue lions or seeking zoological oddities. While known far and wide as a gentleman of temperate demeanor and stoic manner, one is cautioned not to broach the subject of his many failed attempts to find the North Pole within the presence of loaded firearms.

MICHAEL PERKINS illustrator

Born the illegitimate son of a landed baron and a Continental adventuress of some infamy, Michael Perkins has gained great fame and renown as a *bon vivant* amongst the Bohemian set throughout the world. Both as a firebrand and freedom fighter (his guerilla war to liberate the peasants of Valtylvania from under the heel of the onerous Van Clapp suzerainty earned him a reputation for ruthlessness even in that cruel land) and an experimental artiste (his Explorations Of Naughtiness exhibit scandalized Brussels) he is championed and lionized throughout the progressive-thinking community. Lately, he has immersed himself in the arena of pictorial storytelling and achieved even richer laurels with, as he puts it, "these simple tools of graphite and ink." Bravo, good sir! Bravo.

LAURA VILLARI colorist

She was the Contessa De Romara until a life of privilege and promise was lost on a single roll of the dice at Monte Carlo. From that day she became simply Laura Villari, a woman dedicated to bringing color to the pale and monochromatic lives of those poor wretches who were once her subjects. Daily she would pick flowers alongside of the Via Romara and deliver them at no cost to the downtrodden and ill of the village she once ruled with benign neglect. It was in these mean streets and shadowed alleys of Villa Romara that she met an impoverished shoelace-maker named Andrea and a great love was born. You see, Andrea was color-blind and lived in a world of black and white. This piteous spectacle inspired Laura to spread her love of tones and hues to the world by way of the sequential visual medium

DAVE LANPHEAR letterer

Fugitive from the law and spy without a flag, David Lanphear taught himself calligraphy at an early age in order to create false documentation that would allow him safe passage over foreign borders to continue a wave of crime and treachery that threatened the very existence of monarchies, sheikdoms and empires the world over. The web of secrets and lies that have fallen into his possession over the decades now protects him from the retribution of his countless enemies. These days, he hides himself away in the wilds of the Florida marshes where he uses his skills at penmanship for good rather than evil

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi and Gina M. Villa

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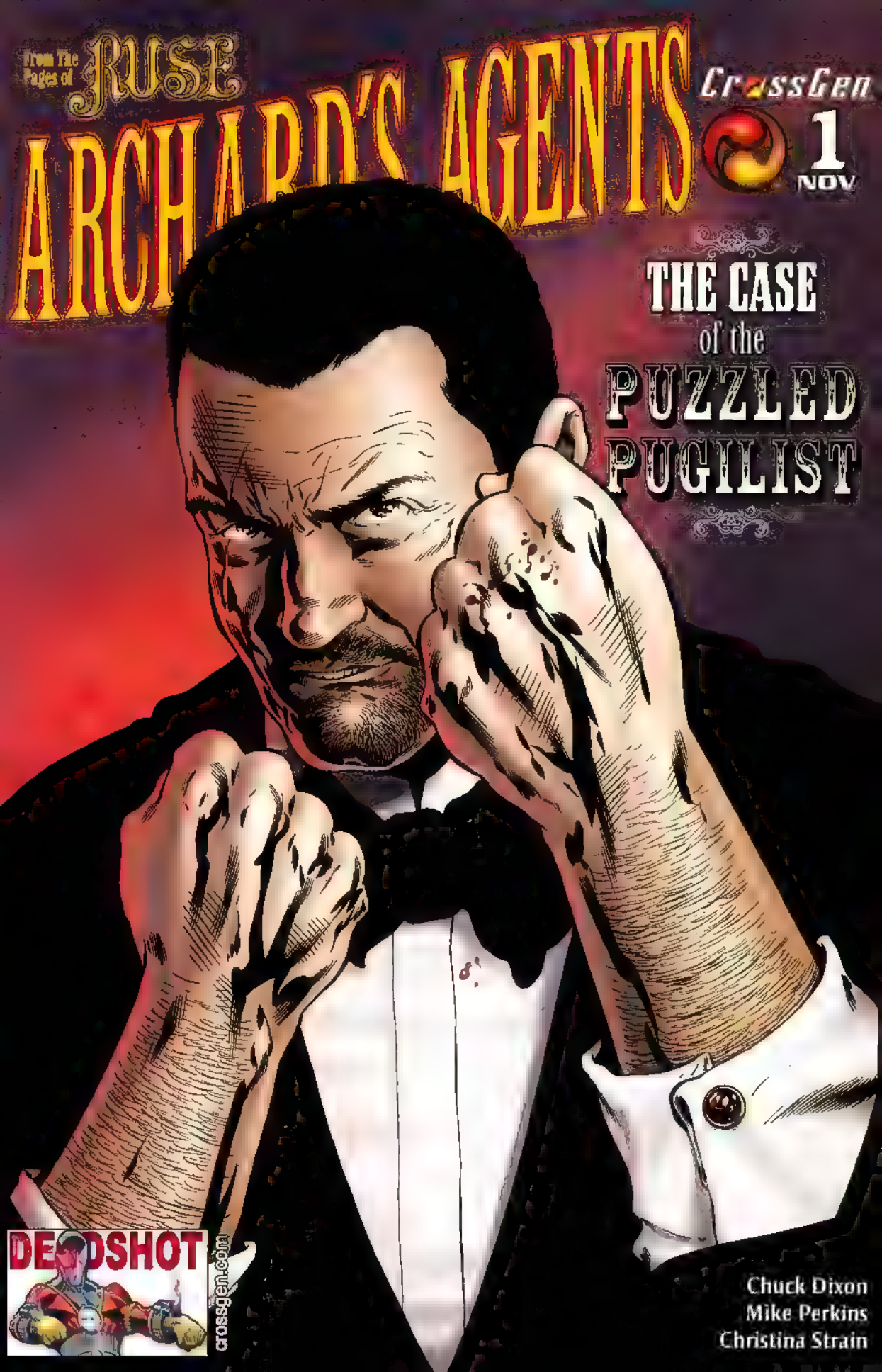
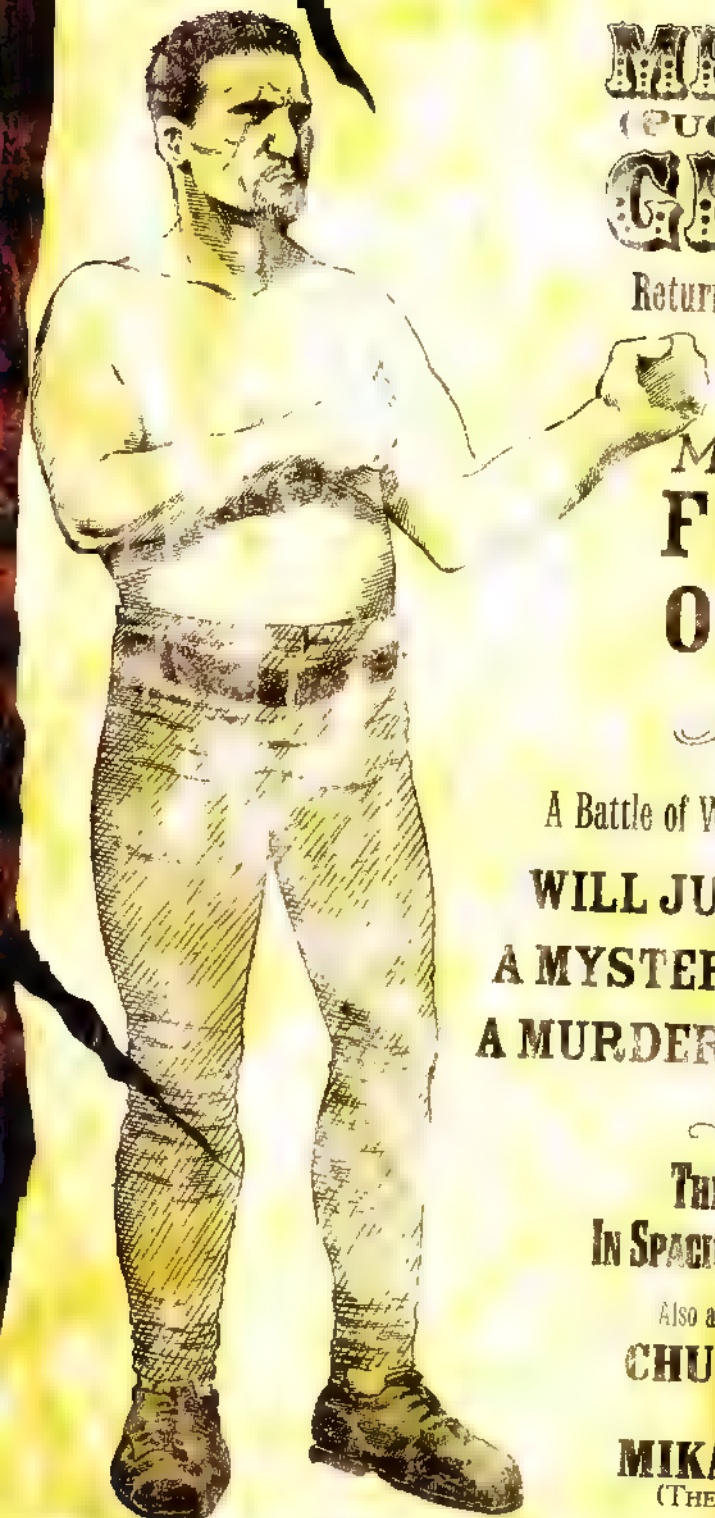
Prizefighter Peter Grimes was the king of the ring and the baron of bare-knuckle boxing. But how will his detective skills match up to Simon Archard's when the embattled boxer is left to his own devices to solve THE CASE OF THE PUZZLED PUGILIST? Murder, betrayal and fisticuffs all come into play in the next mysterious adventure of ARCHARD'S AGENTS.


From The Pages of RUSE
ARCHARD'S AGENTS
CrossGen
1
NOV
THE CASE of the PUZZLED PUGILIST
DEADSHOT
crossgen.com
Chuck Dixon
Mike Perkins
Christina Strain

HONESTY FIRST FIGHT PROMOTIONS

PRESENT

An Exhibition Bout of Extra-ordinary Interest



MR PETER (PUGILISTIC PETE) GRIMES

Returns to the ring to battle

THE MYSTERIOUS FORCES OF EVIL

A Battle of Wits and Deductive Reasoning!

WILL JUSTICE PREVAIL?

A MYSTERY IS UNRAVELED!

A MURDERED MAN *AVENGED*!

THIS VERY EVENING!

IN SPACIOUS MACOMBER HALL!

Also appearing on this program

CHUGGER DIXON

V.

MIKAIL PERKINS

(THE ARK-ANSAS KID)

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ELI MACOMBER
the ne'er do well son
PETER GRIMES
pugilist turned gentleman
ARIANA MACOMBER-LYND
the victim's daughter
ALISTAIR DEMARCO
an artist of note
GREGORY LYND
the daughter's husband
THOMASINA VALPARAISO
adventuress
BISLEY WINCHESTER
sportsman & raconteur
ARISTOTLE "STEGS" PARNASSOS
a villain of low order

It all started 'cause of me checkered past

Me, *Peter Grimes*, former bare knuckle boxing sen-say-shun, curren'ly a *gentleman* of dis-tink-shun.

FIERCESOME FISTICUFFS

THE FARTINGTON PUNCHING PALACE

PUGILISTIC PETER GRIMES V. CLEON CLARK

It was a bit o'history from me days as an athlete.

ON PUNCHING PALACE

the opening of the 21st

A GRAND FESTIVAL OF

BARE KNUCKLE BATTLING

PROUDLY PRESENTS FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT

CURRENT CHAMPION

PUGILISTIC PETER GRIMES

V.

COURAGEOUS COMPETITOR

ELOQUENT ETON SCOTT

I run afoul of them folks what run the sweet science o'pugilism.

On account of me *alliance* with Mr. Simon Archard, the famous toff and solver of crimes

Only, not *ALL* of them villains was brung in when we busted up the boxing syndicate...

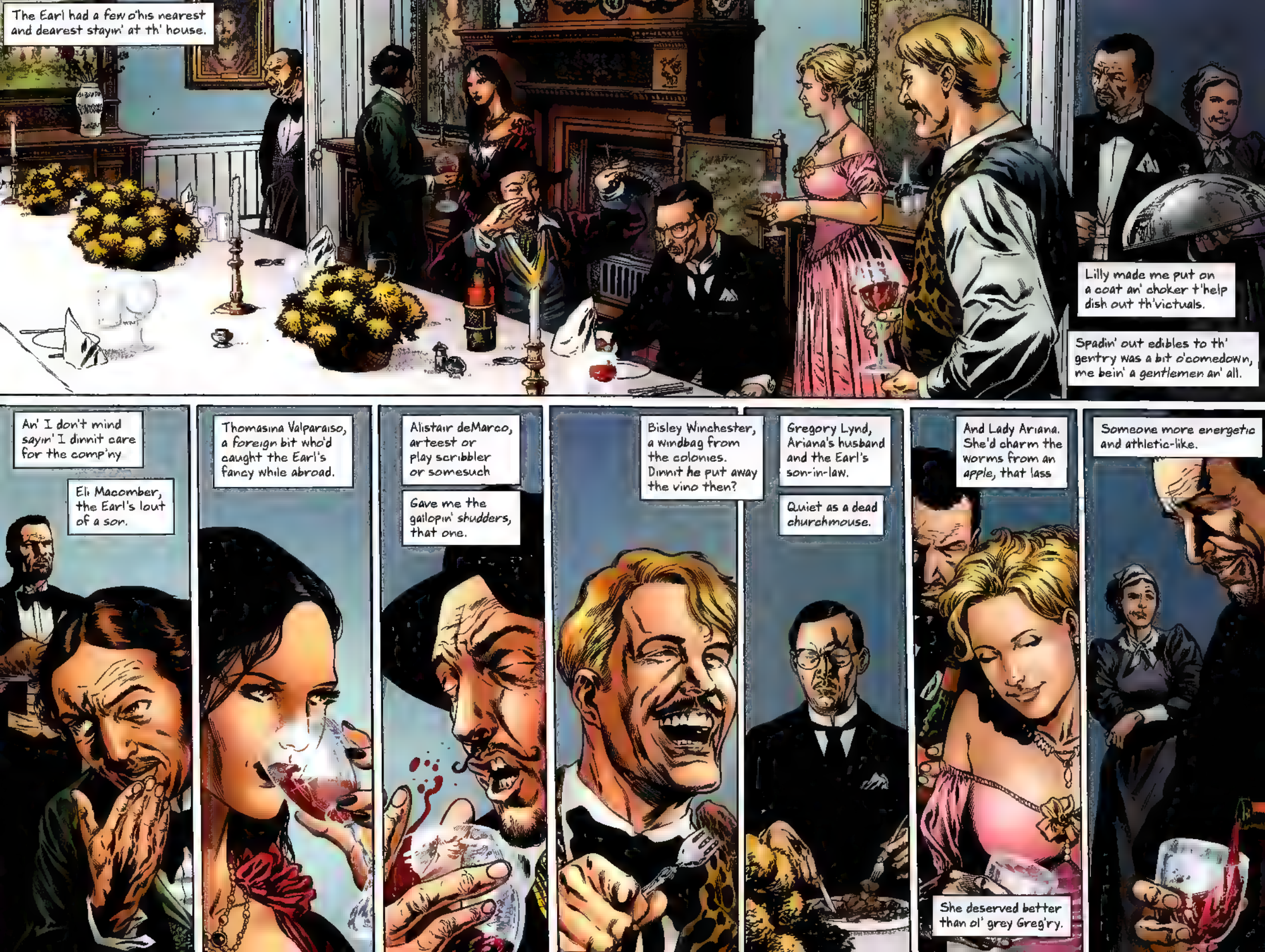
...Aristotle "Stegs" Parnassos was still very much abroad.
SECURE US ENTRY, LADS
He was a terror, that man.
And he'd made sommat of a project of Mister Peter Grimes.
UNNNH!
An' the plain fact that I was a known man of leisure an' substance meant damn all to him.
GRIMES!
I'D LIKE A WORD WITH YE SON!
JUST A WORD OR TWO OR THREE!
So, I left me fash-in-ubble home in Milne Street right quick.
I knew right well, this'd only give me a breather.

Lilly McMurdy was a lass I knew from me days as a pug.
JUST REST YERSELF, GRIMESY YER OVERHEATIN' F'SURE
THAT STEGS IS A ROUGH CHARACTER WHAT'RE Y'GOIN' T'DO, MAN?
HE'LL BE WATCHIN' MISTER ARCHARD'S HOUSE ELSE I'D SEEK THE GREAT MAN'S COUNSEL.
I NEED T'GET OUT O' PARTINGTON, LILLY
SOME'ERE PARNASSOS WON'T COME SNIFFIN' ABOUT
BUT HIS REACH IS A LONG'UN SAME AS ALL THEM BOYS WHAT PLAY ON THE SHY
WELL, TH' MASTER'S GOIN' T'HIS SUMMER HOUSE THIS AFTER
MAYBE I MIGHT INQUIRE IF HE'S NEEDIN' A MAN FOR THE SEASON

Her master was James Macomber, the ninth Earl of Haverhampton.
A jolly enough swell; fancied himself a sportin' type.
I was taken in his employ as "Stebbins," an unemployed stevedore.
2
3
Macomber Hall was a day's travel by train outside the city.
Then by horse-drawns to the house o'the Earl.
This is where the Macombers in Haverhampton Wole have lived--
--since them geezers in iron pants was havin' at each other with swords 'n' such like.
Here's where me hide'd be hidden 'til autumn and no Steg Parnassos to look me up.
An' the Earl took a quick likin' t'me.
An' me to him.
YOU FANCY FISH THEN, DO YOU, STEBBINS?

SAY AGAIN, M'LORD?
FISH, LAD OUR SEA- AND RIVER GOING FRIENDS?
I LIKES COD, M'LORD
YOU'VE A DISCERNING EYE THEN, SON
I APPRECIATE THE COD AS WELL A MAGNIFICENT BEAST, WOT?
I THINK YOU GOT 'UN THERE, M'LORD
SO I HAVE!
GOOD LORD!
EGAD, STEBBINS!
DON'T LET HIM BACK IN THE WATER!
LOOK AT HIM LAD!
'E'S A SPANKER, NO QUESTION, SIR

YOU ARE INDEED A DISCRIMINATING CHAP, STEBBINS.
I S'POSE, M'LORD
YOU'LL APPRECIATE THIS, THEN MY COLLECTION OF F.SH IN THE LIBRARY.
LIBRARY, SIR? I SHOULD THINK THE KITCHEN'S MORE A'PROPRIATE, M'LORD
HAW HAW! GOOD ONE!
THESE ARE CATCHES I'VE MADE THE WORLD OVER YOU SEE, I'M FAR MORE THAN AN ENTHUSIAST
THAT'S PLAIN TIME, SIR
A nutter, more like. But he was a decent sort for a gentry.
An' his daughter was a bit of all right as well, excuse me observation.
FATHER, OUR COMPANY IS WAITING FOR YOU TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE


The Earl had a few o'his nearest and dearest stayin' at th' house.
Lilly made me put on a coat an' choker t'help dish out th'victuals.
Spadin' out edibles to th' gentry was a bit o'comedown, me bein' a gentlemen an' all.
An' I don't mind sayin' I dinnit care for the comp'ny
Eli Macomber, the Earl's lout of a son.
Thomasina Valparaiso, a foreign bit who'd caught the Earl's fancy while abroad.
Alistair deMarco, arteest or play scribbler or somesuch
Gave me the gallopin' shudders, that one.
Bisley Winchester, a windbag from the colonies. Dinnit he put away the vino then?
Gregory Lynd, Ariana's husband and the Earl's son-in-law.
Quiet as a dead churchmouse.
And Lady Ariana. She'd charm the worms from an apple, that lass
She deserved better than ol' grey Greg'ry.
Someone more energetic and athletic-like.

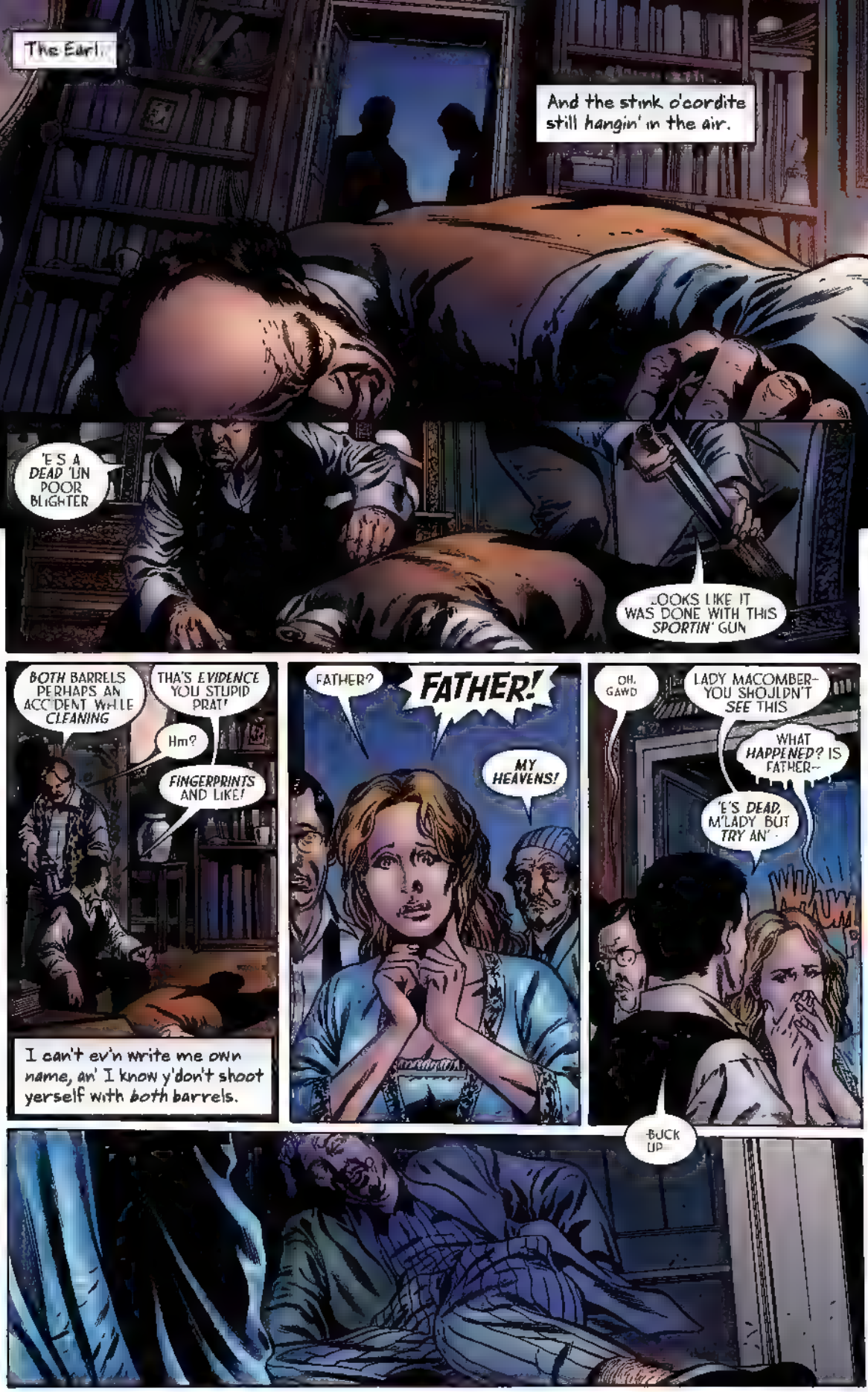
After dinner the swells repair'd t'th' gamin' parlor.
ENJOYIN' YOURSELF, PETER?
WORK'S WORK, LILLY
NOT WHERE THE MISTRESS IS CONCERNED, I RECKON
NOW, WHAT'RE YOU ON ABOUT?
Hmmp!
STEBBINS?
M'LORD?
BE A LAD AND ATTEND TO MY GUESTS IN THE CARD ROOM?
MY PLEASURE, M'LORD
An evenin' of refined distrak-shuns and el-uh-gant gabbin'.
I was playin' at som-yay by keepin' the plonk comin'.
HOW ARE WE COMING WITH THAT MUTEAJX '79?

JAMES, I HAVE THE MOST *FRIGHTFUL* HEADACHE.
THEN REPAIR TO *BED*, THOMASINA, DARLING. SHALL I SEND ALONG A *MAID* TO HELP YOU?
NO *NEED* I ONLY WANT ISOLATION AND *QUIET*
I'VE THE *DEVIL'S* LUCK TONIGHT FATHER THESE CARDS VEX ME MORE WITH EACH HAND
I SHALL *RETIRE* AND PRAY FOR BETTER FORTUNE TOMORROW
MY SON HAS LOST *HEART* BUT I TRUST *YOU* GENTLEMEN WILL REMAIN, eh?
A MAN MAKES HIS *OWN* LUCK WHERE I COME FROM, EARL
JOLLY GOOD, BIS
GOOD NIGHT AL.

SO, M'LORD, DID YOU HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO READ MY LATEST MANUSCRIPT?
WE PLAN ON STAGING IT IN THE FALL PROVIDING WE HAVE THE PROPER PATRONAGE
I DID INDEED READ IT, ALISTAIR
THE PUREST PIFFLE FROM SCENE ONE ON BUT I TRUST YOU CAN LOCATE SOME WEALTHY DOWAGER TO FINANCE IT
PIFFLE, SIR? WHY I POURED MY HEART AND SOUL INTO THAT DRAMA!
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TRY COMEDY THEN I FOUND IT HIGHLY RISABLE
HAW!
JUST AS THIS HAND DELIGHTS ME LOOKS LIKE I WIN ONCE MORE, eh?
BLAST!
YOU ARE QUITE THE SHARP, SIR!
I was admirin' Lord James' skill when Lilly caught my eye.
=HEM!=
What was she playin' at?

CAN I HELP YOU, LILLY?
WELL! I'M S'PRISED YOU NOTICED ME, MISTER GRIMES.
WHAT'S THIS THEN?
WITH ALL THE ATTENTION YOU'VE BEEN PAY'N HER LADYSHIP
"MAY I FILL YER GLASS, YOUR WORSHIP? MAY I DUST OFF YOUR CHAIR, YOUR GRACE?"
I DON'T THINK
S'POSE YOU'RE A GENNELMAN AND ALL THAT
OOP!
NO TIME FOR YOUR OLD ACQUAINTANCES
LILLY
G'NIGHT TO YOU, GUV'NOR
PLEASE YOU MUST STAY
I CANNOT
YOUR FATHER IS JUST DOWNSTAIRS.
HE'S ABSORBED AT PLAY, THOMASINA

JUST AS I AM ABSORBED W TH YOU, DEAREST LOVE
WORDS ONLY WORDS
THEN ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE MY ARDOUR
NOT HERE NOT TONIGHT
THEN WHEN?
I'LL RETURN TO THE CITY ON SOME PRETEXT FOLLOW ME IN A FEW DAYS
I SHALL DIE A LITTLE EACH MOMENT UNTIL THEN
That Eli was a low one, no doubts
Cuckoldin' his own father.
Th' card party broke up past midnight.
I was as done in as after a fifteen rounder.
I was just dressin' for bed when--
UH?
--a boom like bleedin' thunder from downstairs.

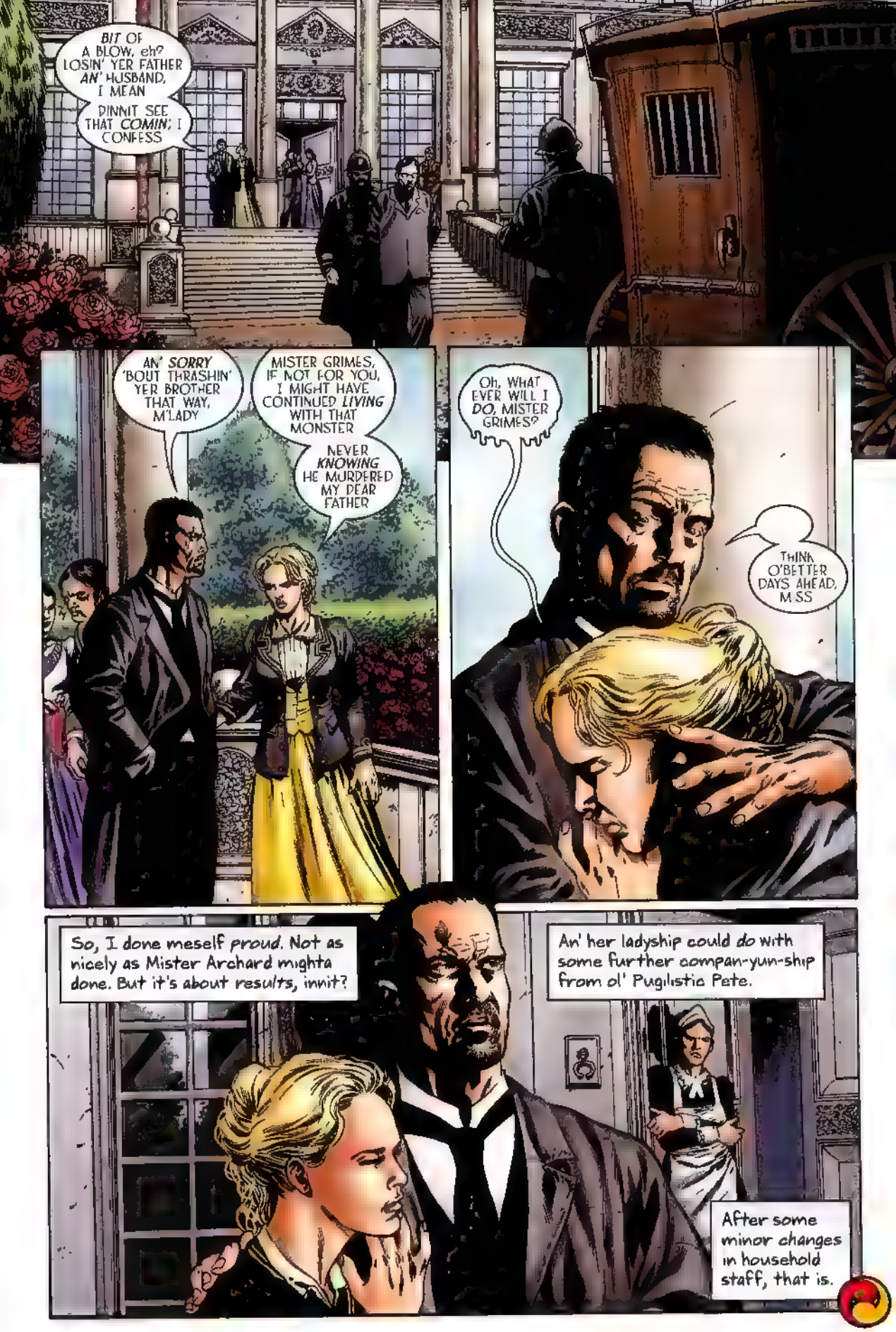

The Earl
And the stink o'cordite still hangin' in the air.
'E'S A DEAD 'UN POOR BLIGHTER
LOOKS LIKE IT WAS DONE WITH THIS SPORTIN' GUN
BOTH BARRELS PERHAPS AN ACCIDENT WHILE CLEANING
THA'S EVIDENCE YOU STUPID PRAT!
Hm?
FINGERPRINTS AND LIKE!
I can't ev'n write me own name, an' I know y'don't shoot yerself with both barrels.
FATHER?
FATHER!
MY HEAVENS!
OH, GAWD
LADY MACOMBER-- YOU SHOULDN'T SEE THIS
WHAT HAPPENED? IS FATHER--
'E'S DEAD, M'LADY BUT TRY AN'--
WHUM!
BUCK UP

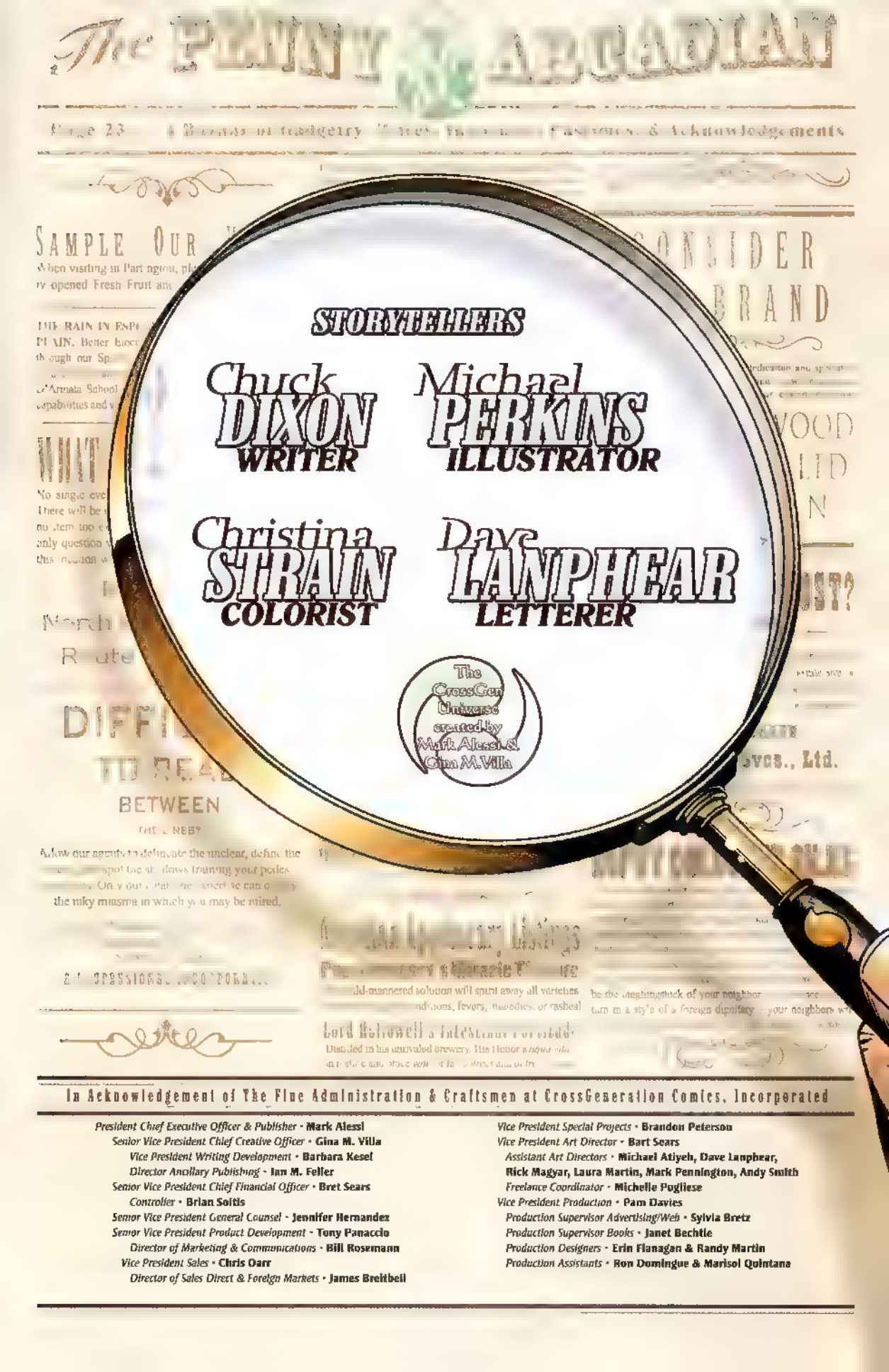
WELL, AS YOU SHOULD KNOW I AM NOT THE MANSERVANT STEBBINS
I'M PETER GRIMES, A CLOSE CON-FEE-DANT OF SIMON ARCHARD, THE GREAT INVESTIGATOR
AN' IT'S YOUR SHEER LUCK I HAPPEN T'BE IN THESE VICINITIES
NOW NOBODY IS TO LEAVE TH'HOUSE 'TIL I'VE FOUND THE MURDERER OF LORD JAMES
YER ALL SUSPECKS 'TIL I'VE HAD A GO AT QUIZZIN' YOU
AN' I'M TAKIN' NO CHANCES ON THE KILLER SCARPERIN'
ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL DETECTIVE, MY FRIEND?
PROFESSIONAL ENUFF F'R YOU, WINCHESTER
YOU DON'T SUPPOSE I MIGHT HAVE--
YOU WERE IN A MAD RUSH T'TOUCH THAT SHOTGUN MAYBE TO WIPE YOUR FINGER MARKS FROM IT, eh?
AN' YOU, MR DeMARCO YOU WAS MORE'N A MITE RED AFTER TH'EARL SAVAGED YOUR PLAY
MISTER GRIMES!
I'LL NOT HAVE MY GUESTS SPOKEN TO IN THIS MANNER!
DREADF'LY SORRY, Y'LADYSHIP
BUT IT'S AN UGLY BUSINESS AND THERE'S A BIT YOU DON'T KNOW

LIKE YOJR OL' DAD'S PARAMOUR WAS *STEPPIN'* ON HIM WITH HIS OWN SON AND HE.R
AIN'T THAT *RIGHT*, SENORA VALPARAISO?
I *NEVER!*
SO'S YER ALL HAVE -
-MOTIVES -
-'CEPTIN' YER LADYSHIP AN MISTER LYND.
AN' YER ALL WAS *HERE* ALL NIGHT
AN' NOBODY'S OFF'RIN NO *BY-YER-LEAVES* F'R NOBODY ELSE -
-SO'S THE ON'Y THING *LEFT* S TO
-IS TO
BLIMEY
THIS IS 'ARDER'N MISTER ARCHARD MAKES T *LOOK*
THIS IS UTTER *RUBBISH* I'VE NEVER *ENDURED* SUCH ROT
Y *HAVEN'T*, eh?
I SHOULD SAY *NOT* AND I FA.I TO

UNNH!
MISTER GRIMES!
Y'DONE IT, Y'BLOODY FORNICATOR!
UH!
UNNH!
HE DONE IN Y'R OL' DAD M'LADY!
HIM AN' TH' FOREIGN BINT INN T'GETH'R!
YOU'LL KILL HIM!

STOP! WILL YOU PLEASE STOP!
I KILLED THE EARL!
GREGORY?
HE CHEATED AT CARDS
I'D HAD QUITE ENOUGH


BIT OF A BLOW, eh? LOSIN' YER FATHER AN' HUSBAND, I MEAN
DINNIT SEE THAT COMIN', I CONFESS
AN' SORRY 'BOUT THRASHIN' YER BROTHER THAT WAY, M'LADY
MISTER GRIMES, IF NOT FOR YOU, I MIGHT HAVE CONTINUED LIVING WITH THAT MONSTER
NEVER KNOWING HE MURDERED MY DEAR FATHER
Oh, WHAT EVER WILL I DO, MISTER GRIMES?
THINK O'BETTER DAYS AHEAD, M'SS
So, I done meself proud. Not as nicely as Mister Archard mighta done. But it's about results, innit?
An' her ladyship could do with some further compan-yun-ship from ol' Pugilistic Pete.
After some minor changes in household staff, that is.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Dave LANPHEAR LETTERER
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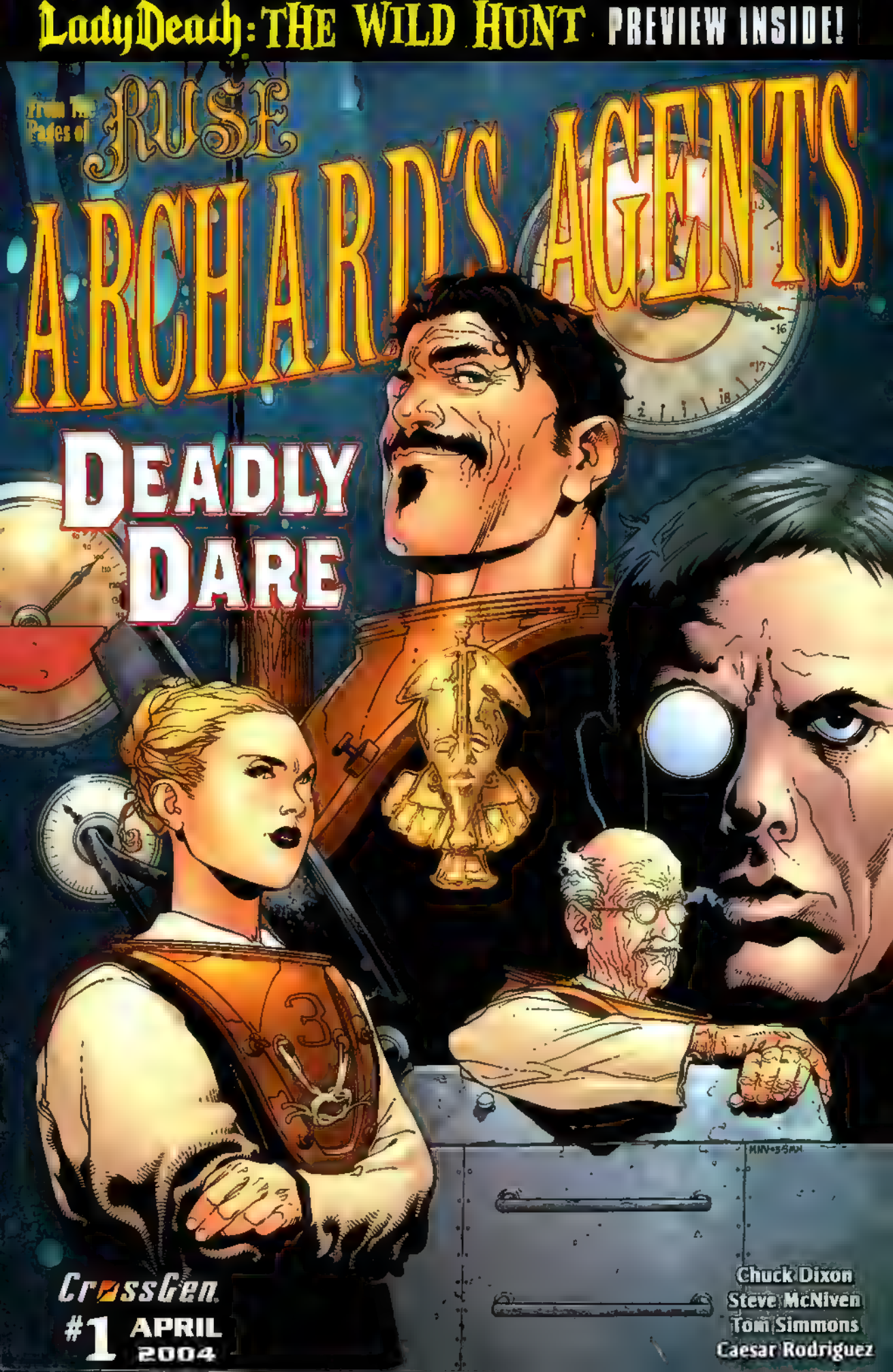
LadyDeath: THE WILD HUNT PREVIEW INSIDE!
From The Pages of RUSE
ARCHARD'S AGENTS
DEADLY DARE
CrossGen
#1 APRIL 2004
Chuck Dixon
Steve McNiven
Tom Simmons
Caesar Rodriguez

Esteemed Archaeologist and holder of the DeMuuten Prize for Geological Research

INVITES SELECTED GUESTS TO A LECTURE OF RARE INTEREST AND EXCITING IMPORT

The learned gentleman of science and letters will exhibit a discovery that has confounded and consternated the greatest minds of the age and extrapolate on its meanings and implications for the world at large.

DO NOT DARE MISS THIS LECTURE AND EXHIBITION BEING HELD TONIGHT ONLY ON THE MAIN AUDITORIUM STAGE OF THE SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM HALL IN GROSVENOR SQUARE.

Members of the press establishment and qualified scientific professionals only need attend.

Tea and refreshments will follow at the lecture's close.

Chuck DIXON
WRITER

Steve McNIVEN
PENCILER

Tom SIMMONS
INKER

Caesar RODRIGUEZ with Justin THYME
COLORISTS

Dave LANPHEAR
LETTERER

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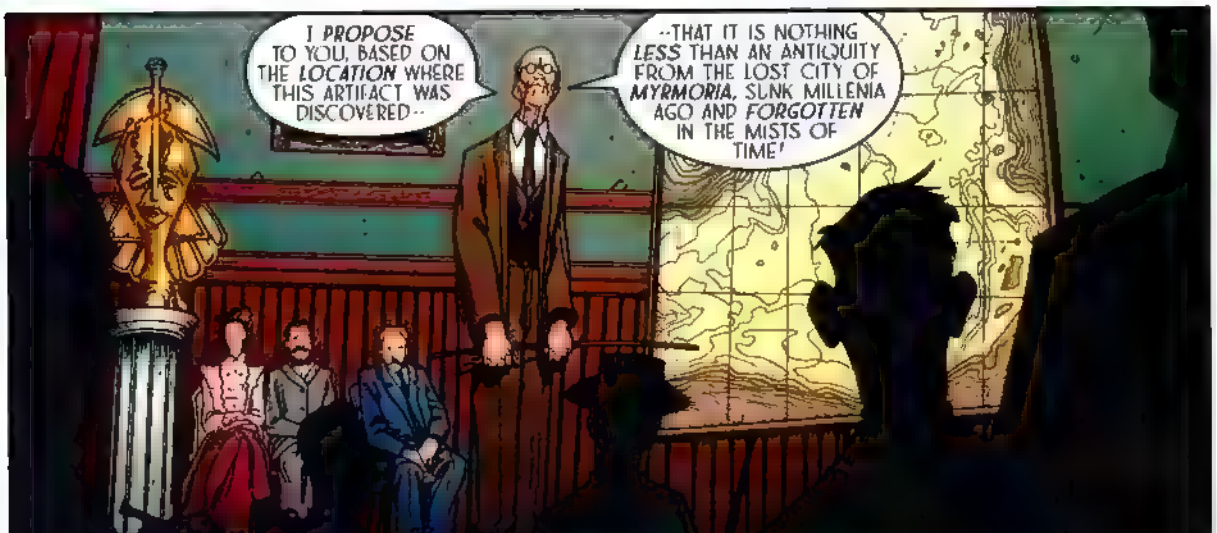
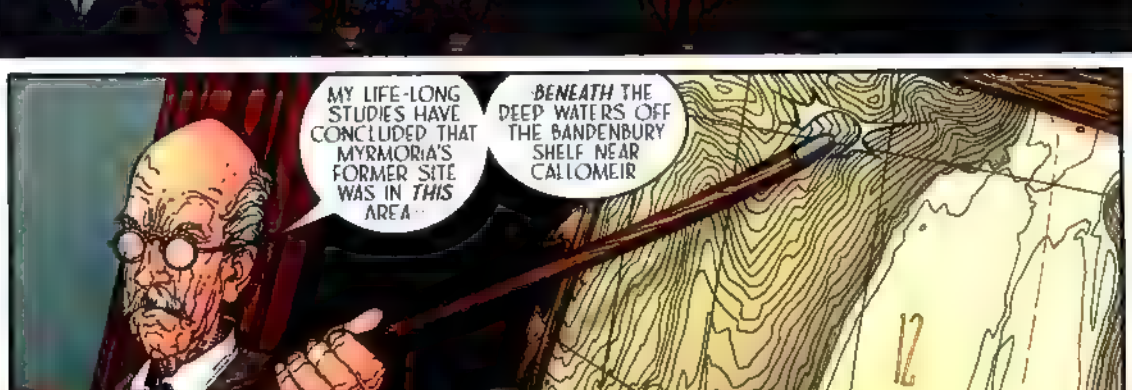
THEOPHILUS DARE.
Man of action, daring & keen intelligence!
BONITA NYE.
Inquiring journalist with steel beneath those velvet charms.
EVERETT AUSTEN.
Provincial man of learning with an eye to The Future.
WAGRAM VANDERBOOT.
Ice water for blood and a heart of stone.
SEAMUS McFLEAGLE.
Mad.
Rather quite mad.
?
THE JELLICOE MONSTER.
Creature of nature or the imagination?
MYRMORIA OR THE SUBMERGED METROPOLIS

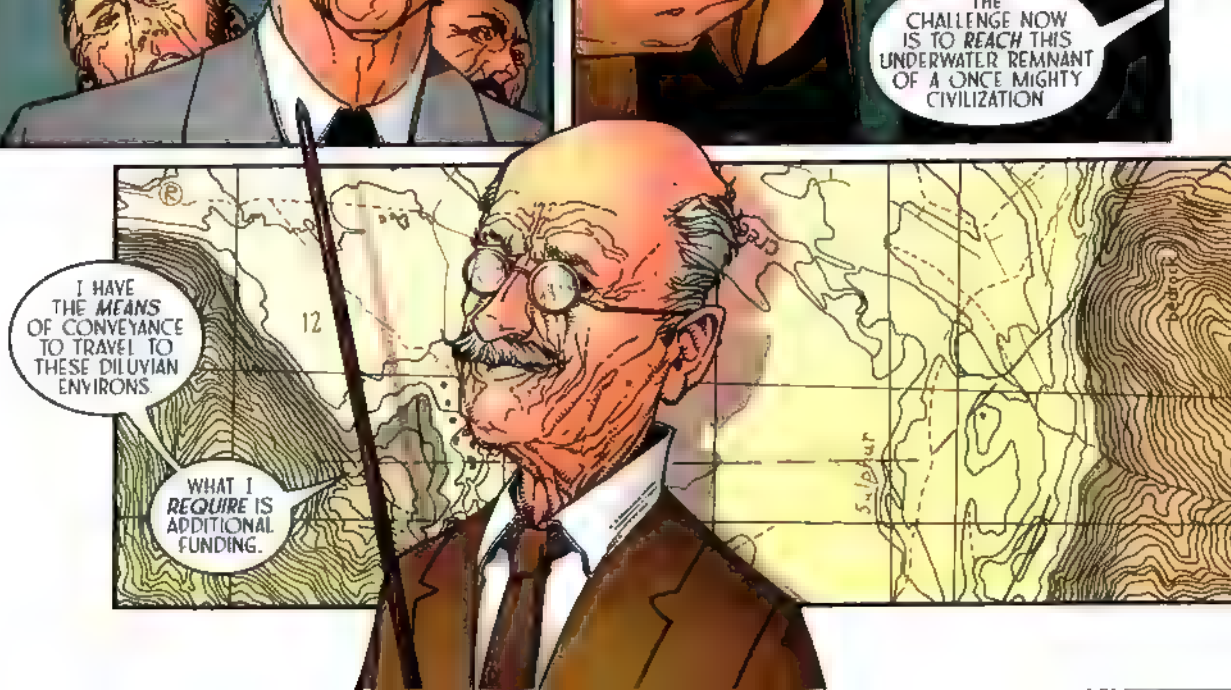
Our tale begins on the bounding main in the fishing fields of Callomier Bay.
HAUL 'ER IN, YE SCUTS!
SHE'S MANKY STUCK!
OR WE CAUGHT OURSELVES A MONSTAH!
ASIDE! ASIDE!
BABBLIN BEEZUM!
IT'S A TREASURE!
Weeks later in the cosmopolis of Brynweirin, a day's travel by rail from Partington.
--FAR MORE THAN A TREASURE, GENTLEMEN!
--A LEGACY FROM MANKIND'S DISTANT AND BENIGHTED PAST!


I PROPOSE TO YOU, BASED ON THE LOCATION WHERE THIS ARTIFACT WAS DISCOVERED--
--THAT IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN AN ANTIQUITY FROM THE LOST CITY OF MYRMORIA, SUNK MILLENIA AGO AND FORGOTTEN IN THE MISTS OF TIME!

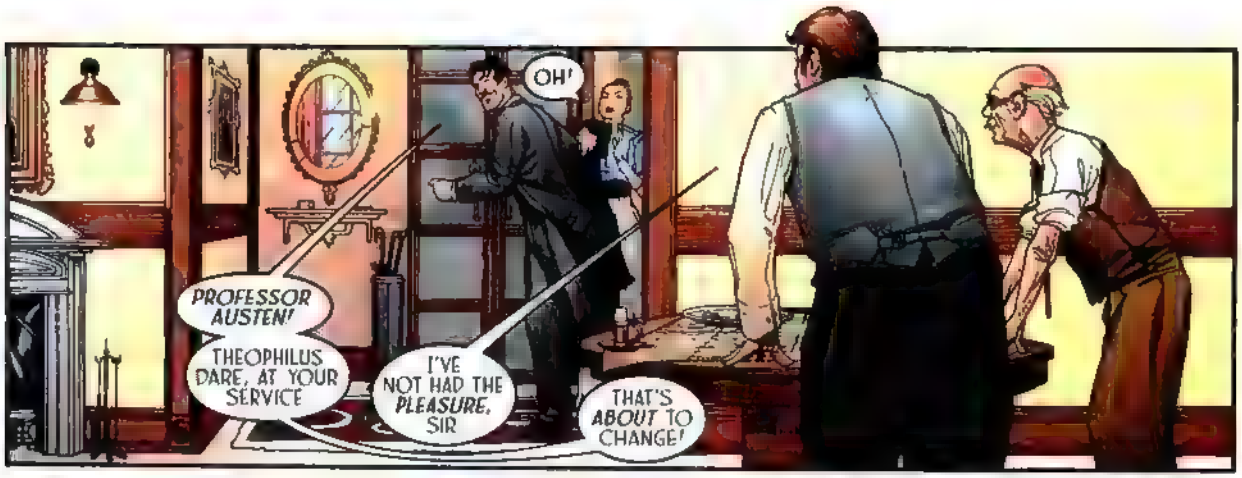

MY LIFE-LONG STUDIES HAVE CONCLUDED THAT MYRMORIA'S FORMER SITE WAS IN THIS AREA...
BENEATH THE DEEP WATERS OFF THE BANDENBURY SHELF NEAR CALLOMEIR

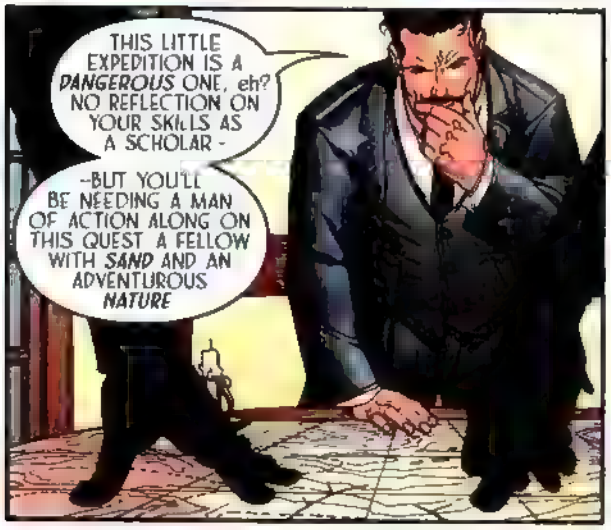
THERE I EXPECT TO FIND THE RUINS OF MYRMORIA, IN ALL ITS SPLENDOR

THE CHALLENGE NOW IS TO REACH THIS UNDERWATER REMNANT OF A ONCE MIGHTY CIVILIZATION

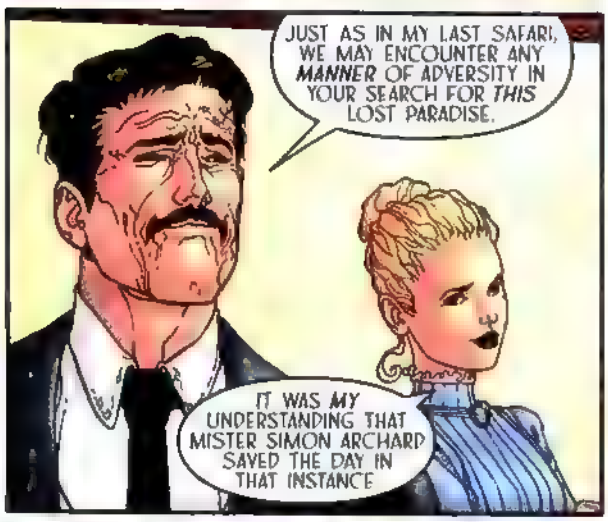

I HAVE THE MEANS OF CONVEYANCE TO TRAVEL TO THESE DILUVIAN ENVIRONS.
WHAT I REQUIRE IS ADDITIONAL FUNDING.

MY NEWSPAPER, THE BRYNWEIRIN DAILY CITIZEN, WILL PROVIDE THAT FUNDING, PROFESSOR AUSTEN
MISTER WEEMS?
I AM PREPARED TO OFFER YOU A BANK DRAFT--
--FOR ONE MILLION IN CASH
MISTER WEEMS, I
CALL ME HALSTON, SIR
-AADD001-
MY GIVEN NAME IS EVERETT, SIR IT WOULD PLEASE ME GREATLY WERE YOU TO CALL ME SUCH
That evening in Professor Austen's hotel.
42°32'38"
GIVEN THE CURRENTS AND POSITION OF THE FISHING BOAT, I FEEL THIS IS OUR AREA OF INTEREST
WE CAN LEAVE WITHIN DAYS
SIMPLY SMASHING, EVERETT
NOK NOK
MISS NYE, WOULD YOU PLEASE GET THE DOOR?
IT MAY BE THE CELEBRATORY CHAMPAGNE I ORDERED
YES, MISTER WEEMS
NAME'S THEOPHILUS DARE, MISS. IS THE PROFESSOR IN RESIDENCE?
HE'S RATHER ENGAGED AT THE MOMENT, SIR


OH!
PROFESSOR AUSTEN!
THEOPHILUS DARE, AT YOUR SERVICE
I'VE NOT HAD THE PLEASURE, SIR
THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE!


THIS LITTLE EXPEDITION IS A DANGEROUS ONE, eh? NO REFLECTION ON YOUR SKILLS AS A SCHOLAR -
--BUT YOU'LL BE NEEDING A MAN OF ACTION ALONG ON THIS QUEST A FELLOW WITH SAND AND AN ADVENTUROUS NATURE

I AM NOT CERTAIN--
OF COURSE YOU'RE NOT, MISTER WEEMS!
THAT'S WHY YOU NEED A GUY WITH MY BRAND OF COURAGE!
YOU WON'T REGRET THIS, GENTLEMEN!


JUST AS IN MY LAST SAFARI, WE MAY ENCOUNTER ANY MANNER OF ADVERSITY IN YOUR SEARCH FOR THIS LOST PARADISE.
IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT MISTER SIMON ARCHARD SAVED THE DAY IN THAT INSTANCE

WELL, BEING A MAN OF MODEST COMPOSURE, I ALLOWED IN MY WRITINGS FOR THAT DETECTIVE TO COLLECT THE LAURELS

The following day finds our party on the banks of the river.

YOU HAVE YOUR BOAT PARKED HERE PROFESSOR?

NOT JUST *ANY* BOAT, MISTER DARE

SO, YOU'RE A *JOURNALIST*, MISS NYE IT MUST BE *EXCITING* TO COVER THE ADVENTURES OF A WORLD-RENOWNED FIGURE

I ASSUME YOU REFER TO *YOURSELF*, MISTER DARE

AS I *STATED* I'M THE *MODEST* SORT

YOU KEEP THAT ASPECT OF YOUR PERSONALITY WELL *CONCEALED*, SIR

YEAH, I'M A BIT OF A *CONUNDRUM* THAT WAY. AN *ENIGMA* A TRUE -

WHUH?

SPEECHLESS, MISTER DARE? NOW, THAT *IS* A WONDER

IT'S A CREATION OF MY OWN DESIGN

IT POSSESSES THE *PARTICULAR* REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNDERSEA EXPLORATIONS *NECESSARY* TO PROVING MY HYPOTHESIS

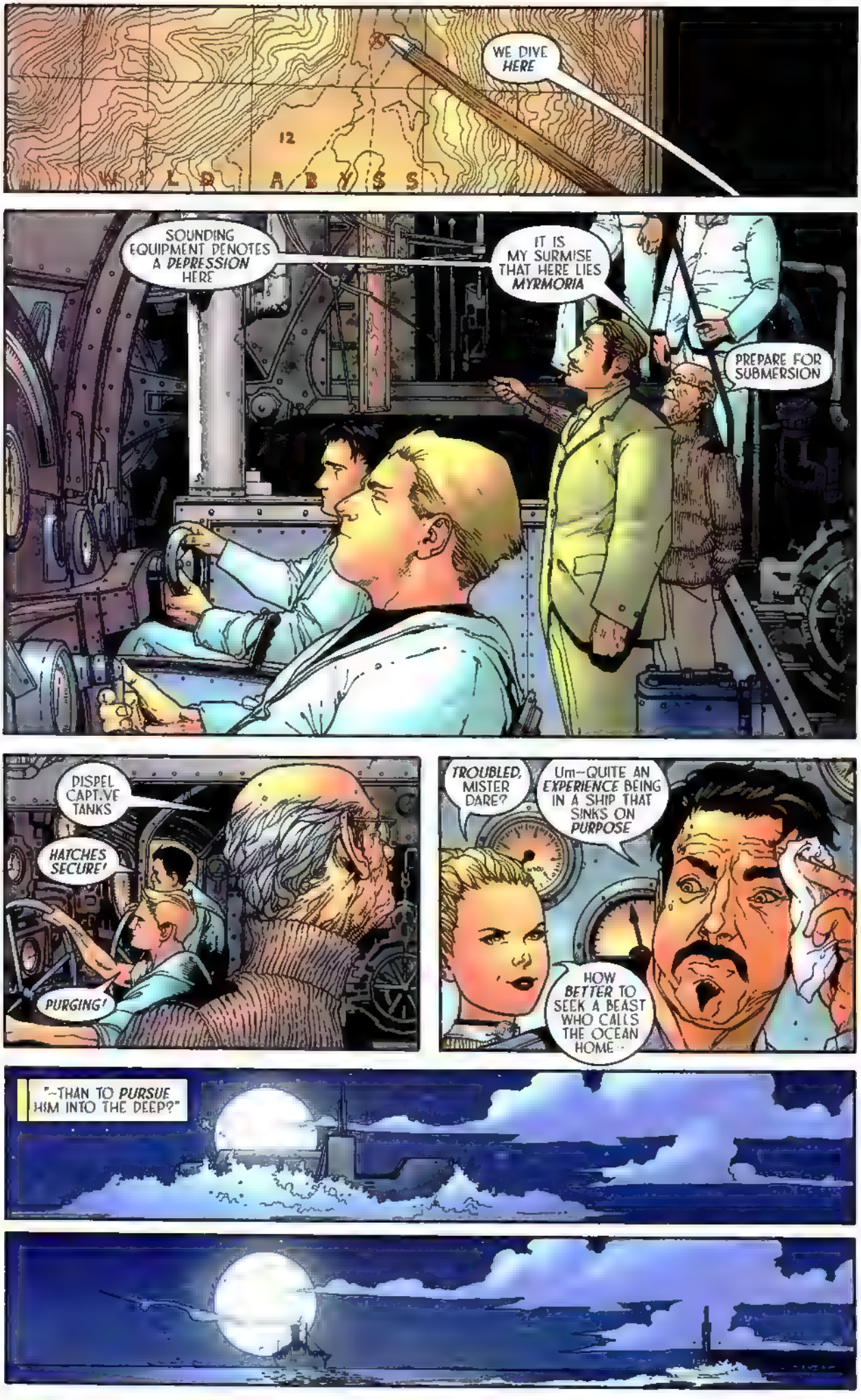
I CALL IT A *SUBMERSOSPHERE*

SUBMUH-SUB--

WE MUST WAIT UNTIL *NIGHTFALL* TO DEPART

I HAVE PROMISED THE *GOVERNMENT* THAT THIS VEHICLE WILL REMAIN A SECRET FROM THE PUBLIC

"THE SUBMERSOSPHERE'S *MILITARY* APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE OBVIOUS
"CERTAIN FOREIGN INTERESTS MUST BE KEPT IGNORANT OF ITS EXISTENCE."
EVENING, MISS NYE
MISTER DARE WHAT *IS* YOUR INTEREST IN ARCHAEOLOGY?
NOT VERY *KEEN*. FRANKLY I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THINGS THAT ARE *ALIVE*
I'M NOT CERTAIN I *CARE* FOR YOUR INNUENDO, SIR
NO INNUENDO *HERE*, MISS
I'M LOOKING FOR *ANOTHER* LEGEND. *THE JELLICOE MONSTER* IT'S A BEAST THAT INHABITS *THESE* VERY WATERS
I *HAVE* HEARD THE TALES
I MEAN TO PROVE THAT THEY'RE *TRUE* AND WITH A CRAFT LIKE *THIS*--
I COULD *HUNT* THE ANIMAL DOWN AND BRING IT TO EXHIBITIONS
SOMETHING LIKE *THAT* COULD BE *WORTH*--
-A BUCKET OF *MOONBEAMS*, MISTER DARE


WE DIVE HERE
12
WILD ABYSS
SOUNDING EQUIPMENT DENOTES A DEPRESSION HERE
IT IS MY SURMISE THAT HERE LIES MYRMORIA
PREPARE FOR SUBMERSION
DISPEL CAPTIVE TANKS
HATCHES SECURE!
PURGING!
TROUBLED, MISTER DARE?
Um--QUITE AN EXPERIENCE BEING IN A SHIP THAT SINKS ON PURPOSE
HOW BETTER TO SEEK A BEAST WHO CALLS THE OCEAN HOME--
"--THAN TO PURSUE HIM INTO THE DEEP?"

PLANES LEVEL DEPTH AT *FIVE* FATHOMS

DIVING TO *TEN* FATHOMS.

HANDS TO STATIONS AND AN EYE OUT FOR THE HULL.

OUTSTANDING

ISN'T THIS *RIPPING?*

WE ARE THE *FIRST* TO LOOK UPON THIS SUNLESS WORLD

RIPPING

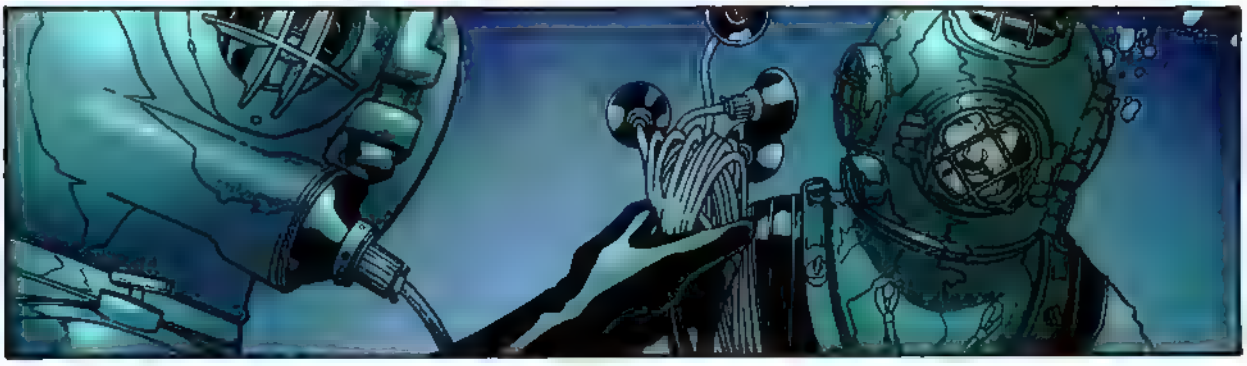
Um

QUITE *SO*

PERHAPS *YOU'D* CARE TO USE THE VIEWPORT, MISTER DARE TO SEEK YOUR *MONSTER*, I MEAN

NO Um VERY *KIND* OF YOU, MISS NYE

THE SUBMERSO-SUIT IS *SIMPLICITY* ITSELF
IT IS *HERMETICALLY* SEALED SO AS TO KEEP THE WEARER DRY
THE GUTTAPERCHA HOSES LEAD *BACK* TO THE 'SPHERE WHERE BREATHABLE AIR IS PUMPED TO US BY THE *CREW*
IS THAT WEAPON *LARGE* ENOUGH, MISTER DARE?
IT'S NOT THE WEAPON, IT IS THE *MAN*, MISS
IS IT
THIS IS A VOX REVERBO TUBE *THROUGH* IT THE WEARER CAN, BY HARMONIC VIBRATION OF THE COPPER LINING -HEAR THE *VOICE* OF THE USER ON THE OTHER END AND VICE VERSA
SO SING OUT IF YOU SEE ANYTHING BIG, SCALY, AND FULL OF *FANGS*
I WOULD RATHER HOPE YOU HAVE NO *USE* FOR THAT DEVICE, SIR
Um YOU'RE SURE I CAN *BREATHE* THROUGH THIS *CHAPEAU*, RIGHT?
AYE AYE SAFE'S *HOUSES*, 'TIS!
PARDON?



-CAN YOU HEAR AND UNDERSTAND, DARE?
OH
QUITE PLAINLY, PROFESSOR
RELAY THE SAME TO BONITA PLEASE
DARE HERE CAN YOU HEAR AND UNDERSTAND, MISS?
CLEARLY, SIR MISTER WEEMS. CAN YOU HEAR AND UNDERSTAND MY VOICE?
AS A BELL, BONITA
THEN WE PROCEED TO MYRMORIA

A MOMENTOUS DAY IN THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY

KINDLY PASS THAT ALONG, PARE

CERTAINLY PROFESSOR

MYTH BECOMES FACT LEGEND INTO SCIENCE

GENTLEMEN AND LADY, I GIVE YOU

~MYRMORIA!

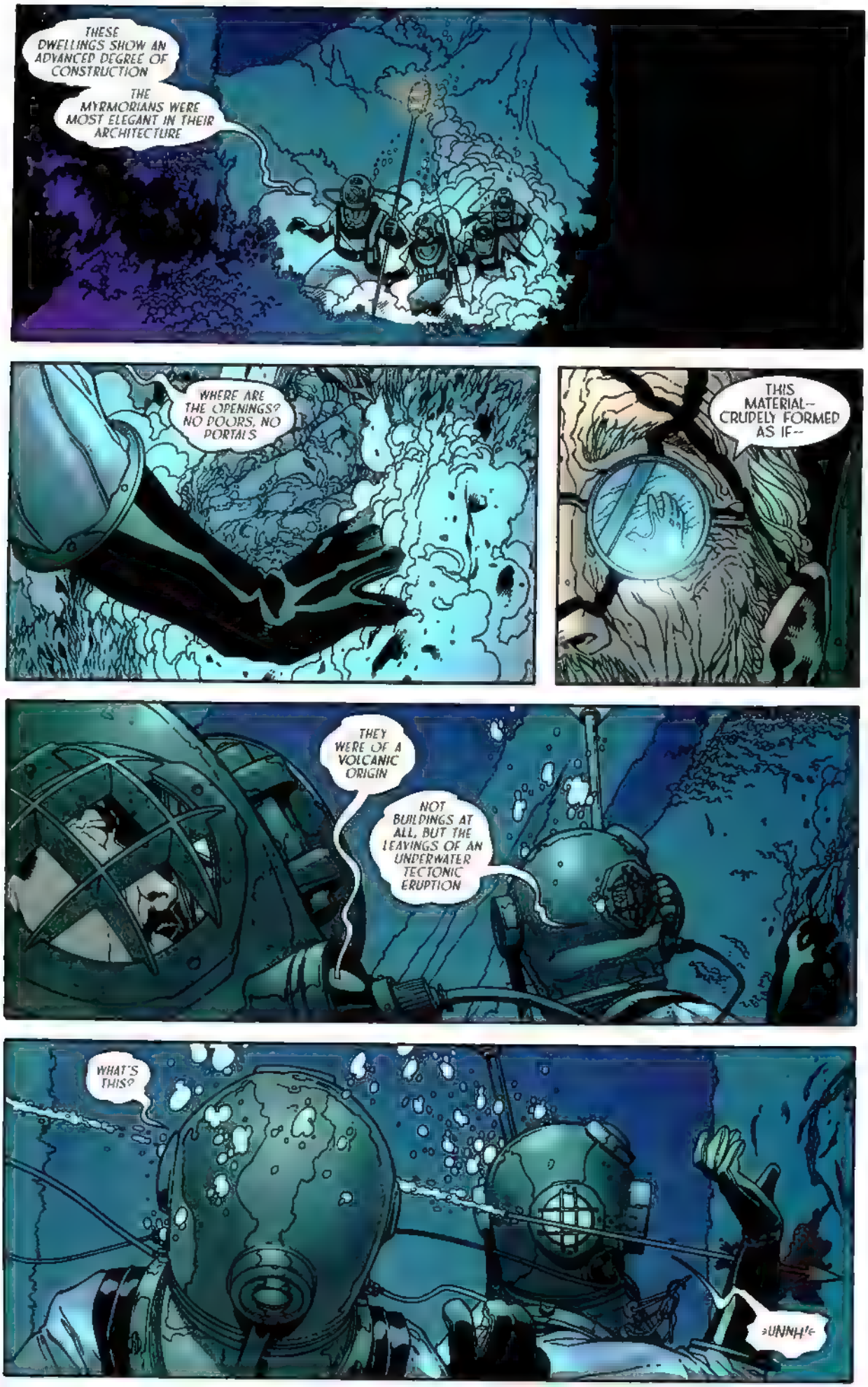
GREAT DAY IN THE MORNING

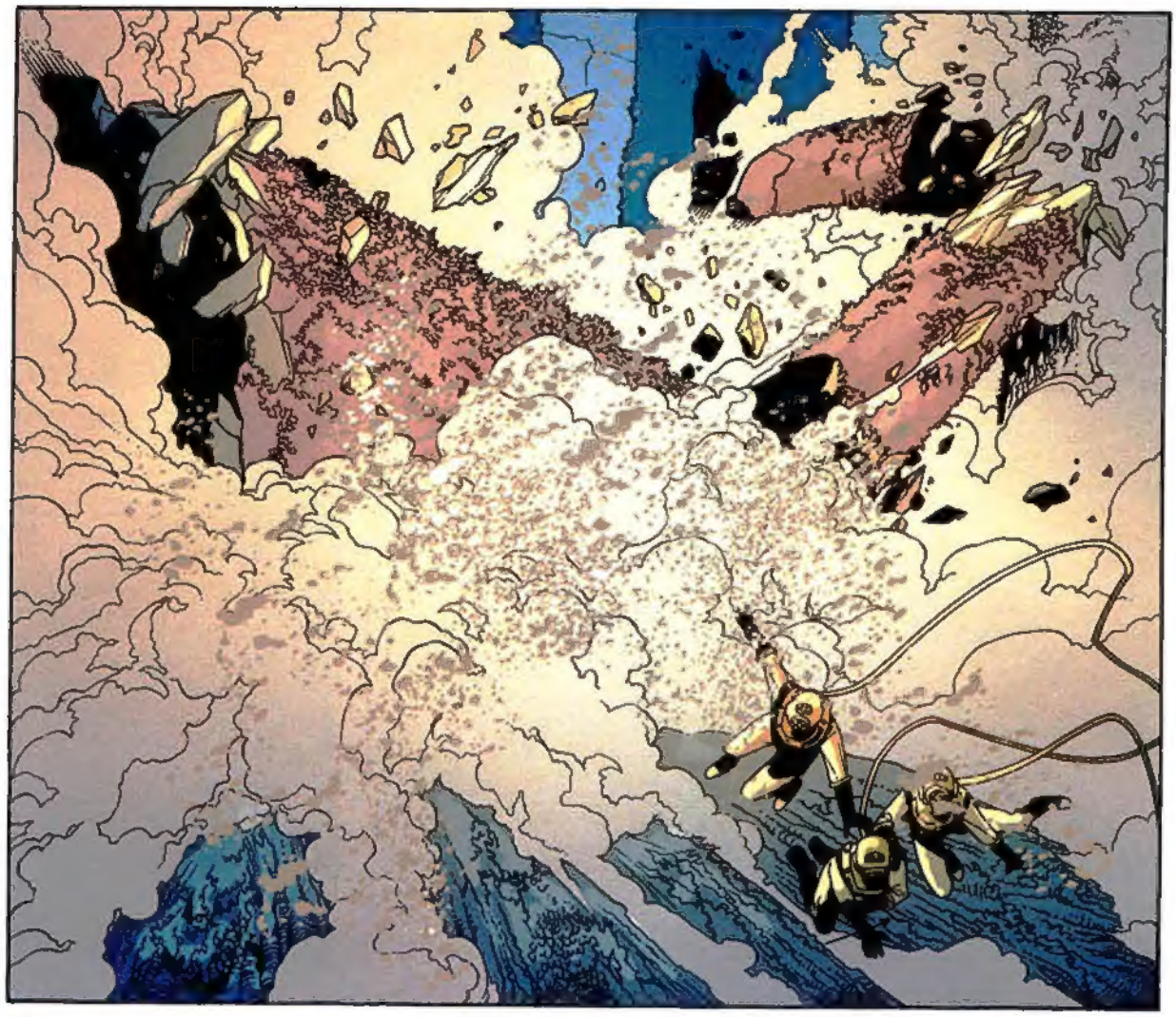
IT'S AS IF FROM A DREAM

ENRAPTURING

STAY CLOSE, FRIENDS THE SUBMERSOSPHERE HAS A FINITE LENGTH OF HOSE TO PLAY OUT

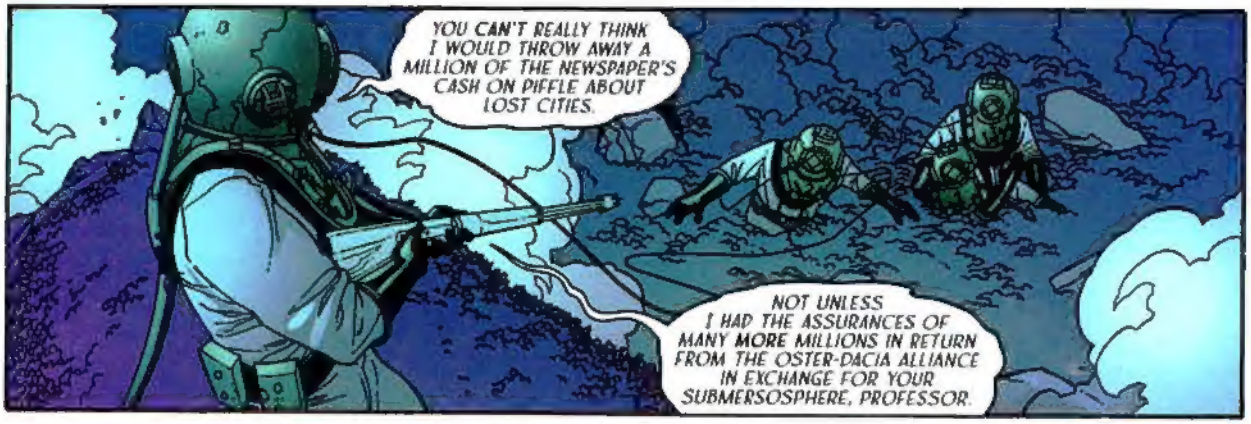
WE MAY EXPLORE AT BEST THE OUTLYING AREA OF THE CITY

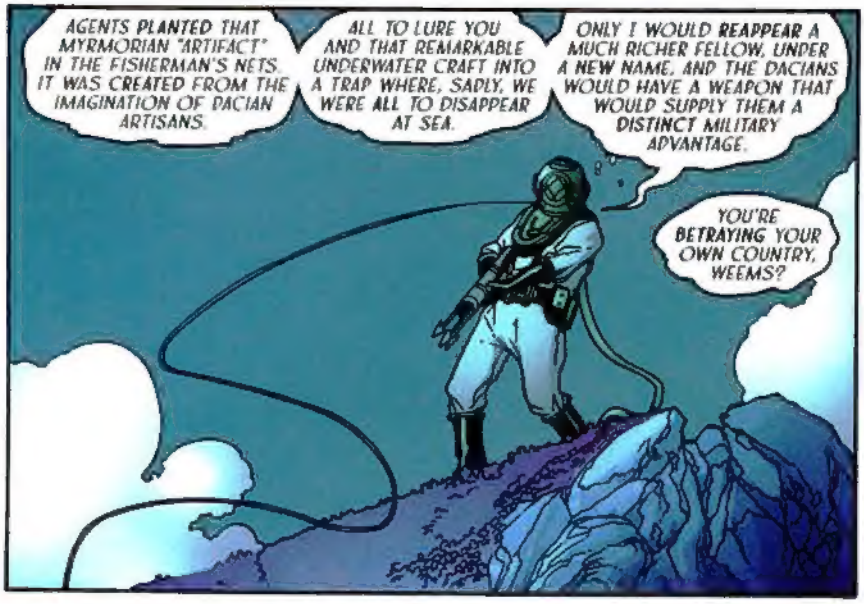

THESE DWELLINGS SHOW AN ADVANCED DEGREE OF CONSTRUCTION
THE MYRMORIANS WERE MOST ELEGANT IN THEIR ARCHITECTURE
WHERE ARE THE OPENINGS? NO DOORS, NO PORTALS
THIS MATERIAL-- CRUDELY FORMED AS IF--
THEY WERE OF A VOLCANIC ORIGIN
NOT BUILDINGS AT ALL, BUT THE LEAVINGS OF AN UNDERWATER TECTONIC ERUPTION
WHAT'S THIS?
»UNNH!«



—NOT AS I HAD PLANNED, I FEAR.
Uh?

YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO DIE. THAT WAS THE DACIANS' END OF THE BARGAIN.
WEEMS.
NOW I MUST GET MY OWN HANDS DIRTY, SO TO SPEAK.


YOU CAN'T REALLY THINK I WOULD THROW AWAY A MILLION OF THE NEWSPAPER'S CASH ON PIFFLE ABOUT LOST CITIES.
NOT UNLESS I HAD THE ASSURANCES OF MANY MORE MILLIONS IN RETURN FROM THE OSTER-DACIA ALLIANCE IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR SUBMERSOSPHERE, PROFESSOR.


AGENTS PLANTED THAT MYRMORIAN "ARTIFACT" IN THE FISHERMAN'S NETS. IT WAS CREATED FROM THE IMAGINATION OF DACIAN ARTISANS.
ALL TO LURE YOU AND THAT REMARKABLE UNDERWATER CRAFT INTO A TRAP WHERE, SADLY, WE WERE ALL TO DISAPPEAR AT SEA.
ONLY I WOULD REAPPEAR A MUCH RICHER FELLOW, UNDER A NEW NAME, AND THE DACIANS WOULD HAVE A WEAPON THAT WOULD SUPPLY THEM A DISTINCT MILITARY ADVANTAGE.
YOU'RE BETRAYING YOUR OWN COUNTRY, WEEMS?

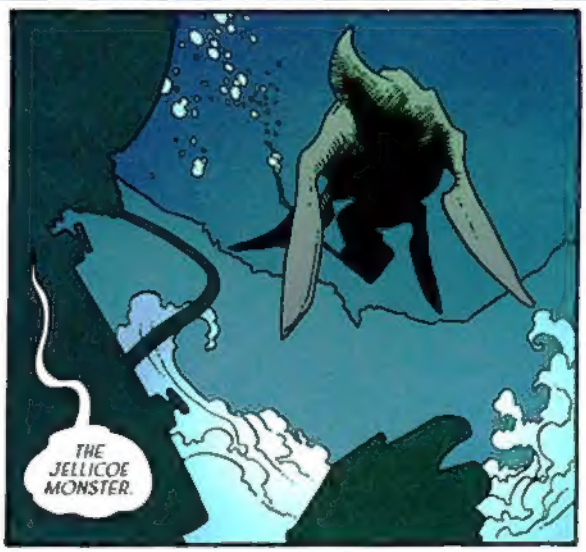
A PROVINCIAL TO THE END, DARE.

BUT FOR ALL YOUR QUAINT NOTIONS OF HONOR--

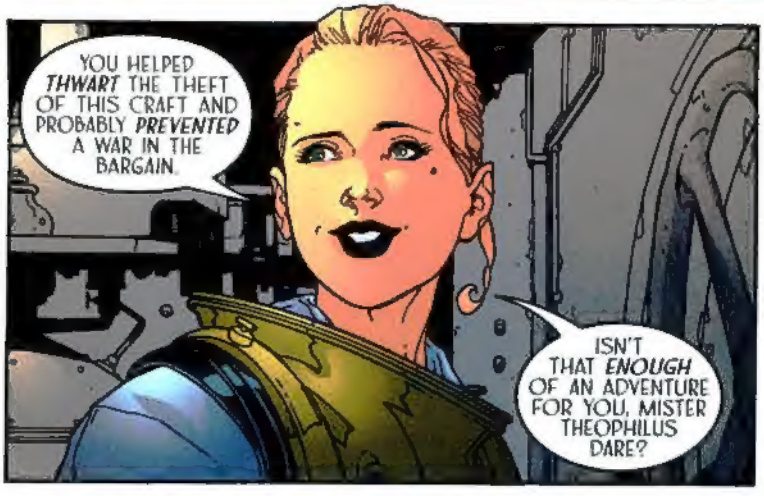
--THERE'S LITTLE YOU OR ANYONE ELSE CAN DO TO STOP ME.

IS THERE?

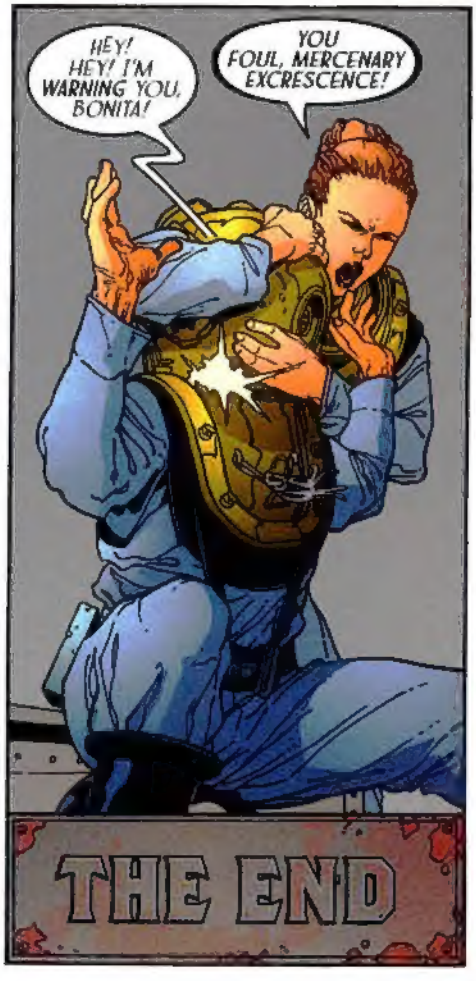
HELP ME! FOR THE LOVE OF—


THE JELLICOE MONSTER.

MY MONSTER.
MY LOVELY, MAGNIFICENT MONSTER.


YOU HELPED THWART THE THEFT OF THIS CRAFT AND PROBABLY PREVENTED A WAR IN THE BARGAIN.
ISN'T THAT ENOUGH OF AN ADVENTURE FOR YOU, MISTER THEOPHILUS DARE?

ADVENTURE?
I WAS IN THIS FOR A PAYDAY, LADY.


HEY! HEY! I'M WARNING YOU, BONITA!
YOU FOUL, MERCENARY EXCRESCENCE!
THE END